



**MINUTES OF THE**  
**LISS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 in Liss Village Hall. 10 Members of the Parish Council and approximately 20 parishioners attended. Mr Keith Budden, Chair of the Parish Council, presided. Also in attendance - Russell Oppenheimer (County Councillor), Ian James (District and Parish Councillor), Sarah Smith (Clerk, LPC) and Katrina Burns (Projects and Funding Officer, LPC).

**Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair of Liss Parish Council opened the meeting by welcoming those present. Apologies had been received from Cllr R Mullenger.

**Presentation of the Villager of the Year Award 2025**

The following presentations were made:

- Dorothy Collard was awarded the title of Villager of the Year 2025 for her services to the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust.
- Adrienne Leduc received a certificate to recognise her nomination for the award for services to Liss SpeedWatch.
- Andy Gray received a certificate to recognise his nomination for the award for services to the Newman Collard Tennis Club and organising the Liss Festival 2024. The certificate was accepted by his wife on his behalf.
- Brenda Eves received a certificate to recognise her nomination for the award for her work for Liss in Bloom.
- Emma Glazier received a certificate to recognise her nomination for the award for her work at Liss Athletic Football Club (Juniors).
- Liss Band received a certificate to recognise the Band's nomination for the award for band playing services to the community. The certificate was accepted by Geoff
- Mark Lapiki received a certificate to recognise his nomination for the award for his creation of the Crossing Dropping app/website.
- Nigel Drury received a certificate to recognise his nomination for the award for services to Liss Foodbank.
- Dave Scarlett received a certificate to recognise his nomination for the award for his services to the village at U-Do-DIY (he was not present to accept the certificate).

**Parishioner's questions**

One Parishioner raised a concern about the management of the Riverside Walk, and whether the Parish Council had been given an opportunity to comment on the work of EHDC in relation to it. Cllr Budden assured the parishioner that LPC do work closely with EHDC on the management of the Riverside Walk but there had been some issues; there had also been issues

regarding insurance for volunteers. Cllr Payne added to this response stating that volunteering on the Riverside Walk had stopped because EHDC were not able to insure volunteers to help maintain it. LPC have insurance in place for volunteers and the possibility of extending this to a volunteer group working on the Riverside Walk had been looked into. Once the risk assessment had been completed the volunteers would be able to commence. Around 16 volunteers were ready to start in Spring. Cllr James stated that EHDC have a new management plan in place for the Walk and there has been pressure from both district councillors to make sure this is implemented effectively. He is awaiting an update on a Volunteer Policy for EHDC. Anyone with any concerns on the Riverside Walk should contact himself or Cllr Mullenger to pass on to EHDC officers. Cllr Payne informed parishioners that all the bridges in need of repair would be fixed as funding had been agreed.

A follow up question was raised regarding the felling of trees, and whether guidelines for a nature reserve were being followed. Cllr James replied that this was being done by the South Downs National Park Authority and that he can check with them. Cllr Payne reported that the only trees being felled were those that were dangerous or that had ash die back.

One parishioner questioned why there was no communication by EHDC as to what was being done on the Riverside Walk, and why. She stated that she was appalled that they had not released the Management Plan in the public domain.

On another subject, one parishioner asked on behalf of Liss In Bloom what could be done about wood chippings being dumped by the Liss Village gateway sign at the Flexcombe entrance to the village. She also expressed concerns about unsightly litter bins by Tescos covered in stickers, a broken bench in the centre of the village, and she stated that the station area needed smartening up. The Clerk responded that the bench and bins were on land belonging to Tescos, but LPC had requested permission to carry out repairs to the bench on the land; this was given and works had been undertaken. Cllr Budden stated that it was not known who owns the land where the wood chippings had been dumped but that he would look into it, the litter bins are owned by EHDC but we could look into getting this issue sorted, and that the Rail Partnership had funding which could be used to purchase more planters around the station area.

### **Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

The minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 had been circulated. These were proposed by Dorothy Collard as a correct record of the meeting and seconded by Clive Olley, with those present in favour.

### **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting or the 2024 Annual Report.

### **Chair's Report**

The Chair, Cllr Budden, provided the following report:

The 2024/25 Civic Year has yet again been a busy year, of which more in a moment. As has become the norm, we have published our proposed plan for Parish Council activities for the coming year, which is attached to this report.

### **Community Engagement**

The Parish Council is committed to encouraging effective local community engagement, and to developing relationships between the Council, individuals, and voluntary and community groups. The Parish Office continues to be open every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

We continue to use the Liss Parish Council Website at [www.lissparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.lissparishcouncil.gov.uk) to tell the community about the business of the council. The Council has also continued to maintain its social media presence, via Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram, to help keep parishioners informed. We host a monthly councillor surgery on the third Monday of the month (the same day as the Council meeting) at the Triangle Centre.

An important form of engagement with the community is that Parish Councillors serve as representatives on a variety of local bodies, for example, the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust, The Triangle Centre, Crossover and the Liss Forest Residents Association. We have also supported the work of the Liss Speedwatch Group, Liss in Bloom and the Liss Men's Shed.

Each year we also give funding support to a variety of local initiatives. Grants have been made this year to East Hants CAB, the Liss Area Historic Society, the Newman Collard Trust, 1<sup>st</sup> Liss Scouts, Home Start Butser, Rake Village Hall, LUPIN, St. Mary's Church, The Triangle Centre, Liss Heart Trust, The Liss Lunch Club, Liss Band, the British Legion and the Rosemary Foundation. We would encourage local organisations to submit grant applications if you require additional funding.

### **Facilities**

The Village Hall and the Pavilion both continue to be well used both by community groups and private bookings for a wide range of activities and events.

Our allotments continue to be very popular with high occupancy rates and we are continuing to undertake some improvements to enhance the sites.

All of our recreation grounds continue to be popular and the facilities are all well used. In Liss Forest we have upgraded the play area, including replacing the remaining items in the fenced play area and upgraded the facility. West Liss Recreation Ground now benefits from table tennis, and the Pavilion car park now hosts a parcel locker and visiting food vans. We have undertaken a number of green initiatives, including planting a large number of trees and wild flower areas in our grounds, and Newman Collard Park has seen extensive bulb planting which we can now see starting to bloom. In addition to this, bug houses have been commissioned which the Men's Shed are constructing for us.

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Newman Collard Park, provided by the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust, has got delayed by the planning process, but we are hopeful that construction of this facility can begin this calendar year.

I would like to thank the Men's Shed for their continued help with projects throughout the village and of course Liss in Bloom for the tremendous work they do keeping the flower beds and hanging baskets looking so vibrant – they really do bring the village centre to life.

We continue to work with EHDC on management of the Riverside Walk, including the control of Himalayan Balsam and other invasive species growing along the Riverside Walk and at the Andlers Ash allotment site.

### **Roads and Traffic**

Traffic through the village is a continuing concern for residents and the Parish Council has been promoting a number of measures to address concerns, including additional speed indicator devices.

We are aware that there are continued issues with traffic along Forest Road and Andlers Ash Road and we will work with Hampshire County Council to investigate possible solutions (and

their funding) to improve the situation but sadly we don't have a magic wand and so solutions are likely to take a number of years.

### **Village Centre improvements**

We commissioned Hampshire County Council to work up proposals for possible enhancements to the village centre to make it a more attractive place for residents and visitors alike. The initial consultations have now concluded and Andy Smith, Chair of our Highways Committee will be updating you further later this evening.

It is important to stress that we are still in the early stages of what will be a major project for the village over the coming years.

### **Planning and Development**

We have continued to provide feedback to the local planning authority, the South Downs National Park, on planning applications across the Parish, and we are pleased that for the majority of decisions, our views have been taken into account. Unfortunately, we don't win them all.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we anticipate plans coming forward for some of the other development areas identified in the Liss Neighbourhood Plan, and taking up the planning issues arising from the Village Centre proposals.

### **Commemorations**

It was great to see a full turnout for the Remembrance Parade in November 2024. Liss has built a good reputation for its Remembrance Sunday event and long may that continue.

2024 was also the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and I was pleased to be able to plant a tree in the Memorial Gardens at Newman Collard Park as part of their commemorative event.

This year is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE-Day. Planning of a suitable commemorative event in the village is underway.

### **Changes to Councillors**

This year has seen a few small changes to our councillors. Karen Tordoff has stood down - we thank Karen for all of her hard work, especially on environmental issues (including the Mill Road orchard), getting the new speed indicator devices up and running around the village and also issues relating to the Andlers Wood development. We wish her well for her future. We are delighted to welcome Rebecca Crane on to the Parish Council in Karen's place.

Paddy Payne is now my vice-Chair, Clayre Williams continues as Chair of our Finance Committee, Clive Olley is Chair of the Facilities and Charities Committees, Andy Smith continues as Chair of our Highways Committee, and I have continued to chair our Planning Committee. I would like to extend my thanks to Sue Halstead and Roger Hargreaves, for agreeing to be co-opted onto committees to help us fulfil our duties as your Parish Council.

### **District Councillors**

We welcome our two District Councillors, Roger Mullenger and Ian James and thank them for their work for the village community and their regular appearances at our full council meetings.

## **County Councillor**

At county level, we have Russell Oppenheimer as our county councillor. I would like to thank Russell for his continued hard work at HCC and his regular appearances at our full council meetings.

## **Running the Council**

The work of the Parish Council is totally dependent on our Parish Clerk, Sarah Smith and the support within the Parish office. The office team consists of Sarah, Rebecca Lawrence our Assistant Clerk, Sandra Humphrey our Responsible Finance Officer and Katrina Burns our Projects Officer. Sandra is leaving us soon, and this means we will have a slight adjustment of roles within the office. We also look forward to welcoming Hannah to join the team in the next few weeks.

All of our officers have worked hard to keep the Council going and support initiatives to improve our services, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to them for their commitment and enthusiasm, and for Sarah's continued steadfast leadership during the year.

They have been supported by Jed Deane, our caretaker for the Village Hall and groundsman, and Julie and Pete Ryan, our caretakers for the Pavilion. Pete also supports Jed on grounds tasks. Also of course, I can't forget to mention Michael Jarman, who will be familiar to many as he litter picks around the village. We are very fortunate as a village to have such an excellent team of councillors and officers, and of course I must also thank the many volunteers who work alongside us to help keep Parish Council business and projects running.

## **External recognition**

It is always good to be recognised for the efforts of our officers and councillors, and of course, all of the community of Liss. This year, in an annual competition by the Hampshire Association of Local Councils, we were delighted to walk away with not only Council of the Year 2024, but also Open Space of the Year 2024. We were also close runner-up in the overall competition for Village of the Year.

So to conclude, another very full year for your Parish Council. Thank you for attending this evening.

The following questions were raised by parishioners:

One parishioner asked what information was held about speeding on Forest Road and Andlers Ash Road. This question was answered by a Speedwatch volunteer who was at the meeting. Whilst there is a perception that people speed along Andlers Ash Road, Speedwatch find that many people are speeding on Hill Brow Road, Station Road and Farnham Road. Cllr James stated that more volunteers were needed for Speedwatch.

One parishioner asked a follow up question regarding evidence of accidents around the village. Cllr James stated that there had been no serious accidents (where 2 or more people are injured) on Forest Road for more than 10 years. There were more accidents at Hill Brow Road and Station Road.

## **Liss Parish Council Draft Action Plan for 2025/26**

During the Council year 2025/26 Liss Parish Council will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain, improve and promote the use of recreation grounds, open spaces and the Village Hall and Liss Pavilion.
- Comment on all planning applications which fall within or impact on the Parish.
- Represent the views and promote the interests of the parish of Liss, particularly in relation to East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council.
- Engage with the community, including parishioners, local businesses, community groups and organisations in Liss, including by maintaining an up-to-date website and social media presence in the village, in line with the Community Engagement Policy.
- Listen, investigate and respond to issues identified by the parish of Liss and, if appropriate, signpost to the correct person/ organisation for resolution/ further progression.
- Work with and support local groups for the improvement of the facilities, environment and social and economic wellbeing in the community.
- Deliver speedy and transparent decisions through full meetings of the Council, supported by appropriate committees and working groups.
- Maintain good financial practices, ensuring transparency and value for money.
- Identify and secure sources of funding to advance LPC priorities.
- Promote training and induction and ongoing support for members of staff and councillors.
- Maintain good governance, including continuing to adhere to relevant Silver (previously Quality) benchmarks and striving towards Gold Status of the Local Council Award Scheme.
- Fulfil responsibilities as Sole Trustee to three Charities: (West) Liss Recreation Ground (Charity number 301871), Village Hall; (Charity number 301872) and Parish Allotments (Charity number 237190).

Key projects for 2025/2026 include:

Funding:

- Deciding priorities for the use of CIL funds allocated directly to Liss Parish Council, drawing on previous and future community engagement, and accessing other sources of investment, including SDNPA CIL.

Highways priorities:

- Exploring options for highways improvements with HCC using the Community Funded Initiatives Scheme, in particular on Andlers Ash Road and Forest Road.

Facilities priorities:

- Considering further enhancements to the recreation grounds in line with the vision for each site, working with partners as necessary. Agree visions for the Riverside Walk and Mill Road Community Garden.
- Continue the improvement programme to enhance the allotment sites.

Village Centre Improvement:

- Consulting on options for enhancement of the village centre with Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.
- Pursuing funding for the railway platform extension.

Environmental issues:

- Contributing to nature recovery through green space projects to enhance biodiversity and protect the environment.
- Considering the LPC approach to reaching Net Zero by 2050.

A query was raised as to whether some of the key projects were ongoing, and whether they needed defining more.

In response to a point made by a parishioner, the Clerk agreed that some of the projects were things that were more general and done on an annual basis. Feedback was welcomed as the document was now open for public consultation.

#### Update on Village Centre Improvement

Cllr A Smith, Chair of the Highways Committee stated that in 2024 there has been a lot of public engagement on designs. Key findings from the consultation and a Pre-Feasibility Study are available to read:

- The Pre-feasibility Study Executive Summary - Microsoft Word - Executive Summary final 4 Nov 2024
- Key findings from the Placemaking Liss Part 2 Engagement Findings Report - PowerPoint Presentation

LPC has commissioned Hampshire to work on a feasibility study and preliminary designs. There will be further consultation on final designs. The estimated cost of implementing these is £2.7 million, and there should be detailed costs of each proposal. Funding sources will hopefully include South Downs National Park Authority, mayoral combined authority for Hampshire and national government funding via growth and active travel pots.

A question was asked by a parishioner about whether the public would be consulted about whether or not they wanted the Village Centre Improvement Plan to go ahead.

Cllr A Smith replied that there were no formalised designs yet. LPC won't be consulting on whether or not the improvements will be going ahead as it won't be using the precept. Designs will be used to draw in monies from elsewhere. There will be a governance structure around any funds bid for. Public consultation has shown that residents are in favour of the project. There will be another consultation session in the Village Hall with technical officers present with regards to final designs and how traffic will be managed.

#### **Report from the Chair of the Finance Committee**

Cllr Williams had prepared a written report as follows:

#### **LISS PARISH COUNCIL - REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

##### **Budget 2024-2025**

The precept for 2024/25 was £263,623. Contributions were made to the Village Hall, West Liss Recreation Ground and Pavilion and the parish allotments. These are all registered charities, which are accounted for separately in accordance with financial regulations.

Estimated expenditure for the year is anticipated to be largely in line with budget.

Local organisations and associations supported by Liss Parish Council grant funding during 2024/25 include:

East Hants Area CAB

Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust  
 Liss Area Historical Society  
 Liss Scouts  
 Home Start Butser  
 LUPIN  
 HIOW Victim Support  
 St Mary's Church  
 Liss Community Association (The Triangle)  
 Liss Band  
 Petersfield Community Radio  
 Tyler's Trust  
 Rake Village Hall  
 Royal British Legion

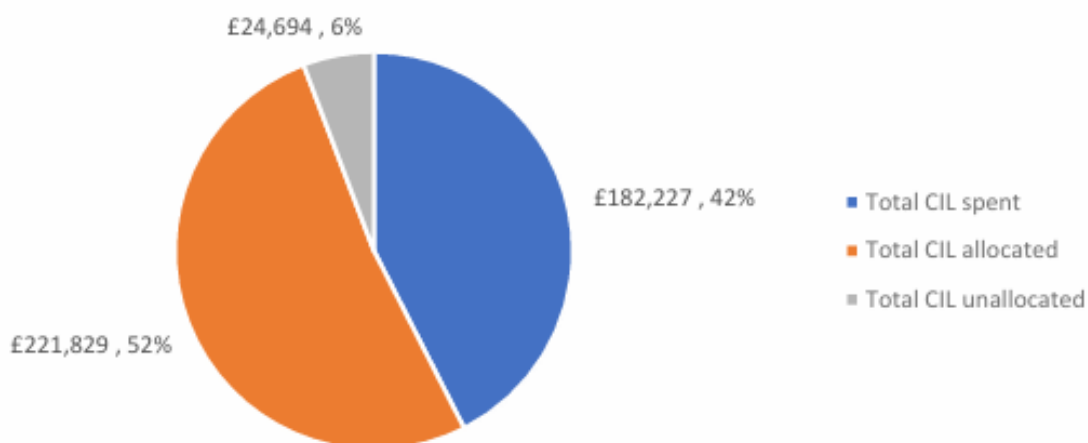
### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and allocations to date are as follows:

<b>CIL Funding</b>	
Total CIL received	£ 428,750
Total CIL spent	£ 182,227
Total CIL allocated	£ 221,829
Total CIL unallocated	£ 24,694
<b>Spent</b>	
Liss pavilion - construction and fit out	£ 6,281
Path to new pentanque terrain	£ 2,970
Watering system for village centre	£ 445
Village Hall building maintenance	£ 5,033
Mill Road Community Garden	£ 7,411
Public notice board - village centre	£ 610
Moveable goal posts - WL and NC	£ 3,776
West Liss play area	£ 25,000
Sports wall at Newman Collard	£ 5,585
Floodlight installation fees	£ 1,151
Crossover	£ 5,206
Pump track installation	£ 56,748
Installation of gym equipment at West Liss	£ 950
Table Tennis table at West Liss	£ 5,550
Speed Indicator Device	£ 4,000
Newman Collard MUGA	£ 3,000
Village centre improvements	£ 12,429
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 34,427
Green space projects	£ 1,656
<b>Allocated</b>	
MUGA at Newman Collard	£ 47,000
Village centre improvements	£ 107,572
Green space projects	£ 3,344
Triangle Centre - paving	£ 5,040
Ecological appraisal of all sites	£ 3,300
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 5,573
Highways Improvements	£ 50,000



## CIL Funding



Allocations are provisional and any underspend will be released for future projects.

### Budget 2025-2026

Budgeted expenditure for 2025/26 is as follows:

	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	% change
<b>Budget:</b>					
Staff cost	127.7	138.3	156.6	171.3	9%
Insurance	7.2	8.3	8.7	8.5	-3%
General administration	14.9	13.9	15.1	15.4	2%
Grounds maintenance	30.5	31.9	30.9	30.4	-2%
Village Hall running cost	21.6	26.3	27.1	29.9	9%
Pavilion running cost	21.1	24.8	25.8	19.8	-30%
Allotment running cost	0.0	0.7	5.2	2.0	-161%
Grants to local associations	10.1	10.3	14.5	16.6	13%
Pavilion loan servicing	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	0%
Capital projects and provisions	0.0	10.0	20.0	17.0	-18%
	260.6	292.0	331.3	338.4	2%
<b>Funded by:</b>					
Precept	237.4	254.1	263.6	270.6	3%
Interest and other receipts	0.0	0.0	20.0	22.8	12%
Rental incomes	23.2	37.9	43.8	45.0	3%
Transfer to/from reserves	0.0	0.0	3.9	0.0	
	260.6	292.0	331.3	338.4	

Staff costs include all salary, employer's NI and employer's pension cost. Staff costs also include an increase to salaries in accordance with guidelines for public sector pay rates.

Pavilion running costs are expected to decrease by £6k. The decrease reflects expected savings to gas and electricity consumption.

Allotment running costs are expected to decrease by £3.2k. The decrease to these running costs is as a result of a backlog in the regular allotment maintenance program.

Provision is made for capital works in respect of feasibility studies, replacement play equipment and safety surfacing.

The Council has set a precept of £270.6k for 2025/2026 and the charge per Band D dwelling will therefore be £100.38 compared with £98.20 in 2024/2025. This is an increase of £2.18 or 2.22% per Band D dwelling.

### **Committee**

The audit of 2023/24 accounts was carried out in April 2024 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Council meeting on 17 June 2024. BDO Legal Law Practitioners, the Council's appointed external auditor, signed the final clearance of the accounts in September 2024.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members – Cllrs Keith Budden, Paddy Payne, Selena Stratford-Tuke, Chris Mort, Clive Olley and Andy Smith – and our Responsible Finance Officer – Sandra Humphries - for their work in the past year.

Cllr Williams highlighted that the finances had been managed with no significant variances against the budget; that the precept levied by LPC had been increased by 2.2% (based on a Band D property).

Cllr Williams concluded by thanking Sandra Humphrey, the Responsible Finance Officer, who is leaving LPC in the coming weeks, for leaving the finances in a much better position than when she joined.

### **Presentation on Devolution**

Cllr Budden gave a presentation on devolution. This can be found here:

#### **Re-allocation of £40k Developer's Contributions**

One parishioner asked how South Down National Park Authority would fit in with the new local government structure. Cllr Budden replied that it would carry on as it is at present, and not come under the new mayoral structure.

One parishioner asked whether parish councils would still be in existence under the new structure, and what effect it would have on LPC. Cllr Budden replied that they parish councils would still exist and working links would not be much different on a day to day basis. Cllr Budden stated the East Hampshire Association of Parish and Town Councils, for which he was Vice-Chair, would be pushing for a quarterly meeting with the mayor once they were in place.

Cllr James added parish councils would likely play a increased role as the interface between residents and a unitary authority. He also felt that residents would be better represented under a unitary authority.

### **County Councillor Report to Parishes 2024/25**

Russel Oppenheimer, County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers, presented the following report:

1. **The Hampshire Pledge**

The Hampshire Cabinet have developed a “Hampshire Pledge” which we are launching this month. I would like to share the pledge with you – see below. The intention is to set out what people can expect from the County Council whilst also encouraging people to take pride and interest in their local community and in their own health and wellbeing. I hope you agree that this is a worthwhile initiative, I would welcome any feedback.



## 2. Highways Update

Despite another wet winter with unprecedented rainfall and several severe storms, Hampshire Highways have kept our road network in relatively good condition. We have not seen an overload of defects as happened two years ago. Over 1,000 fallen trees were cleared from roads overnight during storms. I appreciate that Parish Councils have had to show patience at times. But the roads are noticeably in a much worse state in West Sussex! Now that we have some drier weather I am confident that the Highways teams will quickly address all the outstanding issues.

Despite the funding challenges at HCC, I am pleased to say that an extra £7.5m funding went into Highways in the 2024/25 year. This funding made a difference because it meant that more crews were on standby and more resources were available to those crews. For the coming year, starting on 1 April, national funding for Hampshire Highways has increased by an extra £14,099,000. This puts us in a strong position for the next 12 months. In addition, £4.25m of HS2 money from the Network North scheme is being used each year to resurface 19 main routes across Hampshire, including the A272 through Stroud, over the two-year period 2024-26.

The Highways Engineers have a difficult job and I think they deserve huge credit for their professionalism. The greatest difficulty this year has been surface flooding. The high water table and the heavy rain have caused many localised problems. The reality is that the flooding teams are stretched. The best advice I can give is to keep reporting flood problems on the website here and also make use of the tips in the Community Toolkit on flooding.

## 3. Hampshire Forest Partnership

The Hampshire Forest Partnership which I launched in 2022 continues to go from strength to strength. Over 60,000 trees have now been planted. The winter planting season is just now ending, which makes this a great time to start planning for the next planting season in November 2025 – February 2026.

Free trees and free advice are still available from the HFP team. It would be great to get some more mini-forest projects underway following the success of the mini-forest in Sheet, next to the Adhurst allotments. If you would like to discuss a potential site please drop an email to: [treeplanting@hants.gov.uk](mailto:treeplanting@hants.gov.uk)

#### 4. Standing up for Hampshire

Over the last year, HCC has taken a prominent role in standing up for Hampshire. In our view, Hampshire has been disproportionately affected by Government decisions which were not part of the Labour manifesto.

We have pushed back on the family farms tax which will affect several hundred farms in Hampshire. Hampshire is a county which depends on its family farms for our food, economy, landscape and environment. So in my view it is right that we are taking this stand. We have also written to the Government to protest about the scrapping of winter fuel payments to pensioners. This policy decision will affect Hampshire more than other counties due to our demographics. Finally, we have also led the protests against the Chancellor's increase to Employers National Insurance. This will push up costs for the Council and for care homes by tens of millions, and these costs will ultimately be borne by local taxpayers. We hope that the Chancellor reverses course in her March budget.

#### 5. Year of Health and Wellbeing

In September 2024 HCC launched a Year of Health and Wellbeing. By coincidence I also took on the role of Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing that month. This initiative comes under the auspices of the Hampshire 2050 Partnership: a partnership of local government, business, universities and the voluntary sector. The aim is to integrate health and wellbeing into our workplace policies and day-to-day working practices. It is an opportunity for cross-sectoral working focussing on the health and wellbeing of Hampshire's residents. The three core priorities of focus during the Year of Health and Wellbeing are:

- Physical activity
- Mental wellbeing
- Childhood obesity

I see this as crucial to improving our quality of life in Hampshire. A healthier workforce will also be good for the local economy and will relieve pressure on the NHS. The priorities also intersect with the partnership's other key strategic drivers including impact on economic prosperity, climate change and the natural environment. A toolkit is available at this link:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/visionforhampshire2050/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-toolkit>

6. Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)

Following years of sustained lobbying by Councillors across East Hampshire, we are getting closer to a new HCC policy on management of our BOATs which will reduce conflict, damage and nuisance caused by vehicles.

I am optimistic that the new policy will be approved by the Summer. In future, the intention is that the County Council will seek to maintain its unsurfaced road network as natural unsurfaced corridors for all users to use and enjoy; it will not surface routes to cater for vehicle use. Instead, the County Council will seek to sustainably preserve the physical character of the route and may seek to reduce levels of usage to allow for fluctuations in the condition of the route.

The County Council may then take action to limit or prevent access by motor vehicles, to prevent damage, to ensure that non-motorised users are able to use the routes, and to protect and preserve the nature and character of the route. A new Byways Operating Procedure will give greater weight to environmental designations. Seasonal Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) will be applied to a wider range of byways thanks to a new High Amber category. Signage and barriers will continue to be implemented and further TRO measures may also be considered. I feel that this is definitely a step in the right direction which will benefit local communities and the environment.

7. Beavers return to the South Downs after 600 years

In December 2024 a pair of Beavers named Willow and Wilson were introduced to the River Meon near Petersfield, having been transported from Scotland by the Beaver Trust.



The semi-aquatic mammals, which were hunted to extinction in the 16th Century, create wetlands and wildlife habitats. The impact they have on their new environment will be tracked by a team of academics from Southampton University. They have been busy beavers and have almost chewed their way through this crab apple tree! You can follow the adventures of the Beavers on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Meonsidemeats/>

8. Government consultation on Devolution underway

Hampshire residents are invited to have their say on devolution proposals for Hampshire and the Solent region in a Government consultation which is ongoing. The consultation runs until 13 April 2025 and I would encourage everyone to respond. The consultation can be found here: Hampshire and the Solent devolution consultation - GOV.UK

Commenting, Leader of Hampshire County Council Leader, Councillor Nick Adams-King said: “Devolution represents the biggest change to local government in a generation and as such, it is really important that local people across the wider Hampshire area have the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Collectively, alongside our three partners, joining the Government's Devolution Priority Programme is a fantastic opportunity for Hampshire to self-determine and shape devolution proposals in the best interests of our residents and communities.”

HCC has also developed its own web pages about devolution, including Q&As, which can be found at [www.hants.gov.uk/devolution](http://www.hants.gov.uk/devolution).

9. Summary of grants awarded by me

For transparency, every year I publish my list of grants awarded. Here is the list for the year ending March 2025.

Applicant	Project	Grant (£)
Ropley Parish Council	Installing Kissing Gates to improve access to Ropley footpaths	800
Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust	Bulb and wildflower Project	800
Greatham Parish Council	Community Minibus – purchase of 17 seater to support primary school and the village.	900
Steep War Memorial Club	Potted flowers to improve look of the Village Hall	250
Home-Start Butser	Nurture Parenting Puzzle Training	800
Froxfield & Privett Parish Council	Parish Verge Cutting	800
Steep and Stroud Newsletter	Keeping communities informed and engaged	800
Steep Film Society	Installation of Induction Loop, PA system and professional tuning	500
Petersfield Shakespeare Festival	Production of Twelfth Night	750
Petersfield Twinning Association	Exchange Visits from Warendorf and Barentin	800
Sheet Parish Council	Speed Reduction measures	800
	TOTAL	8,000

Normally, this year's grant round would reopen on 1 June 2025. But the delay to the elections and the budget gap at HCC have complicated matters for this coming year. No decisions have yet been taken on the availability or not of County Councillor grant pots for the year 2025-26. I am expecting that the decision will be taken in September 2025. I am afraid that this means that I will not be able to consider any new grant requests until September.

Cllr Oppenheimer finished his presentation by thanking the LPC Councillors and staff for their hard work, and paying tribute to Nick Wilson, former LPC Councillor, who had encouraged the setting up of the Hampshire Forest Partnership.

No queries were raised from parishioners.

### **Update from East Hampshire District Council**

District Councillor Ian James presented the following information:

### **LPC Annual Meeting - Report from District Councillors, Ian James & Roger Mullenger**

The key points for the year

- We have held surgeries every month. The issues raised varied significantly, but many relate to services provided by Hampshire County Council, particularly speeding, parking, pavements and potholes.
- The EHDC budget in the current year (2024/25), passed in February last year ran into serious problems at an early stage, resulting in staff redundancies and reduced services.
- There has been a reorganisation of the departmental directors from five to three, with new staff just joining, so the effect is not known.
- We have tried to deal with all casework, sharing it for many items to avoid duplication.
- Organising volunteers for the Riverside Walk management has been frustratingly slow.
- All planning applications have been reviewed and commented upon for key issues.

Looking forward

- The new budget has just been passed, with the EHDC element increasing by £5 per year for a band D house. The EHDC part is 8.39% of the total for Liss residents.
- The revisions to the SDNP Local Plan and SDNP Partnership Management Plan have been consulted on. The local plan for the non-SDNP area is also going through a revision which is contentious because of the doubled housing numbers.
- Devolution means there will be a mayoral election next year. This will put a heavy work load on all the local councils. As a result the county elections due in May have been postponed
- Local Government Reorganisation is in progress.
- The reorganisation will merge the county tier and district tier of councils into one layer called unitary councils. The current district (and the small current unitary) councils of the Hampshire area will be grouped into, perhaps, four new unitary councils. The role of district councillors will disappear.
- The process is understood but the timescale will be challenging and there are differences in opinions between the various district council, borough councils and councillors.
- Hampshire has been accepted for the fast tracking process.

- An outline plan of the process of arriving at the final proposal of the area of Hampshire be structured will be presented to the government by this Friday (21st).
- The final plan will be presented by September 26th
- Parish councils will be unchanged

One parishioner questioned what had happened to the 2024/25 budget.

Cllr James reported that the 2024/25 budget shortfall was due to issues relating to investment in commercial property.

**Meeting Closure**

The meeting was closed at 20:45.

DRAFT