



## **MINUTES OF THE LISS ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 18th March 2026**

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on 18th March 2026 in Liss Village Hall.

The meeting was attended by 6 parishioners and the following LPC:

Cllr K Budden (Chair), Cllr P Payne, Cllr S Baldwin, Cllr R Crane, Cllr I James (also representing EHDC), Cllr C Williams, Cllr Stratford-Tuke, and Cllr A Smith.

Also in attendance - Russell Oppenheimer (County Councillor), Roger Mullenger (District Councillor), Sarah Smith (Clerk, LPC), Katrina Burns (Projects and Funding Officer, LPC – clerking meeting) and Hannah McIntyre (Administration Officer, LPC).

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair of Liss Parish Council opened the meeting by welcoming those present.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Mort, Cllr Olley, Cllr Stratford Tuke, Cllr R Smith and Cllr Jerrard.

### **2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 19th March 2025**

The minutes of the meeting of 19th March 2025 had been circulated. These were proposed by Cllr R Crane as a correct record of the meeting and seconded by Graham Burgess, with all those present in favour.

### **3. Matters Arising from the 2025 Annual Report**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting or the 2025 Annual Report.

### **4. Chair's Report**

The Chair, Cllr Budden, provided the following report:

The 2025/26 Civic Year has once again been a busy and productive one for Liss Parish Council, of which more in a moment. As has become our established practice, we have published our proposed plan for the coming year, which is attached to this report.

#### ***Community Engagement***

The Parish Council remains committed to encouraging effective community engagement and strengthening relationships between the Council, residents, and the many voluntary and community groups that serve Liss.

The Parish Office continues to open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. We use our website - [lissparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://lissparishcouncil.gov.uk) - as the primary means of communicating Council

business, and we maintain an active presence on Facebook, X and Instagram to help keep parishioners informed.

Our monthly councillor surgery, held on the third Monday of each month at the Triangle Centre (the same evening as our Full Council meeting), provides a regular opportunity for residents to speak directly with councillors.

Parish Councillors represent the Council on a variety of local bodies, including the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust, The Triangle Centre, Crossover, the Liss Forest Residents Association and the Hills to Harbour Rail Partnership. We have also continued to support the work done by Liss in Bloom Liss Men's Shed, and the now disbanded Liss Speed Watch.

Each year we provide grant funding to local initiatives. This year grants have been awarded to East Hants CAB, Liss Area Historical Society, Crossover Youth Centre, 1st Liss Scouts, Home Start Butser, Rake Village Hall, LUPIN, St Mary's Church, Liss Community Association (Triangle Centre) and the Liss Heart Charity Trust .

We would encourage any local organisation requiring additional funding to submit a grant application.

### ***Facilities***

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

We have taken further steps to improve energy efficiency, including installing solar panels at the Pavilion and upgrading roof insulation at the Village Hall and Parish Office. A programme of further planned improvements to the Village Hall is scheduled for the coming year.

Our allotments remain highly popular, with strong occupancy rates. Improvements this year include the provision of mains water at Riverside allotments, new signage across the allotment sites and at Lower Green a new roof on the shed, thanks to the excellent work of Liss Men's Shed.

All recreation grounds continue to be well used by parishioners and visitors of all ages. West Liss Pavilion car park now hosts an extended parcel locker and a wider range of visiting food vans.

We have also continued our environmental initiatives, including the installation of bug houses in all our green spaces around the Village.

The Multi-Use Games Area at Newman Collard Playing Fields has now secured planning permission following a successful appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. However, due to delays in obtaining permission, some pledged grants have expired, and work is underway to secure replacement funding.

The Mill Road recreation area is now fully in use, including the community orchard.

I would like to thank Men's Shed for their continued practical support across the village and Liss in Bloom for their tremendous work keeping flower beds and hanging baskets so vibrant - they truly enhance the village centre.

We continue to work with EHDC on the management of the Riverside Walk, including the control of Himalayan Balsam and other invasive species along the Riverside Walk and at the Andlers Ash allotment site. We are pleased this year to have reestablished the Riverside Walk volunteers to help with maintenance tasks along the Walk.

### ***Roads and Traffic***

Traffic through the village remains a consistent concern. The Parish Council has promoted measures including the use of Speed Indicator Devices to help address this.

We are aware of ongoing issues along Forest Road and Andlers Ash Road and will continue working with Hampshire County Council to explore possible solutions and funding opportunities. These matters take time and partnership working; unfortunately, there is no immediate solution.

### ***Village Centre Improvements***

Our work with Hampshire County Council continues to establish final designs for the proposed redesign of the village centre, taking into account the public feedback received.

It is important to stress that this remains an early stage in what will be a significant long-term project for the village.

### ***Planning and Development***

We continue to provide detailed feedback to the South Downs National Park Authority on planning applications across the Parish. In the majority of cases our views are taken into account, though sadly not in every instance.

In the coming year we anticipate further proposals for development areas identified within the Liss Neighbourhood Plan, alongside planning considerations arising from the village centre proposals. We will also be positively contributing to the Regulation 19 consultation on the South Downs National Park Local Plan. This consultation is expected to begin in late Spring/early Summer of 2026 and we encourage all residents to take part.

### ***Commemorations***

Remembrance Sunday 2025 was very well attended, and Liss continues to mark the occasion with dignity and respect.

The 80th anniversary of VE Day was also commemorated, and I was honoured to plant a tree on behalf of the Parish to mark that important milestone.

### ***Changes to Councillors***

This year saw one change to our membership, and we welcome Dan Turner to the Council.

Paddy Payne continues as Vice-Chair. Clayre Williams remains Chair of the Finance Committee. Clive Olley chairs the Facilities and Charities Committees. Andy Smith continues as Chair of Highways, and I continue to chair Planning.

My thanks also to Sue Halstead and Roger Hargreaves for agreeing to be co-opted onto committees to assist the Council in fulfilling its duties.

### ***District and County Representation***

We are grateful to our District Councillors, Roger Mullenger and Ian James, for their continued work for the village and their regular attendance at Full Council meetings.

At County level, Russell Oppenheimer has represented Liss diligently. Russell will not be standing for re-election in May, and I thank him for his hard work and consistent engagement.

While I am talking about the County Council elections on 7th May this year, due to a change in ownership of the church in Liss Forest, the polling station for people from Liss Forest wishing to vote will be at the Triangle Centre in Liss. If you will have difficulty accessing the Triangle Centre, I strongly advise you to apply for a postal vote.

### ***Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation***

When I addressed you last year, we anticipated elections this May for a Mayor of Hampshire and the Solent. Since then, the Government has postponed those elections until May 2028.

However, the Hampshire and Solent Combined Authority will still commence operations this May. Its board will consist of two representatives from Hampshire County Council and one representative each from Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council.

It is hoped that representatives from District and Borough Councils will be permitted to attend meetings, though without voting rights.

The Government has determined that any spending decision by the Combined Authority must be unanimous. This safeguard ensures that funding cannot be directed solely to the three existing unitary areas at the expense of the wider county.

The Combined Authority will initially have a budget of £17.8 million per year, rising to £46.6 million per year from 2028/29 when the Mayor is elected. An additional £1.95 million per year will be provided in 2026/27 and 2027/28 to cover operational costs. All funding will be provided by central Government.

In relation to Local Government Reorganisation, we await the Secretary of State's decision, expected before Easter, on the preferred model for new Unitary Authorities covering Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

## ***Running the Council***

The work of the Parish Council depends entirely on our officers.

Our Parish Clerk, Sarah Smith, continues to lead the team with professionalism and commitment. She is supported by Rebecca Lawrence (Assistant Clerk), Katrina Burns (Projects and Funding Officer) and Hannah McIntyre (Administration Officer).

I would like to record my sincere thanks to them all for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

They are supported operationally by caretaker of the Village Hall, and groundsman, Jed Deane, Julie Ryan, one of the caretakers of Liss Pavilion, Pete Ryan, the other caretaker of Liss Pavilion and assistant groundsman, and Michael Jarman, our valued village litter-picker.

We are fortunate in Liss to have such a capable and committed team of councillors, officers and volunteers working together for the benefit of the community.

In conclusion, it has been another full and active year for your Parish Council.

Thank you for attending this evening.

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

Cllr Williams had prepared a written report as follows:

#### ***Budget 2025-2026***

The precept for 2025-2026 was £270,623 or £10.38 per band D dwelling.

Expenditure for the year is expected to be largely in line with budget.

Local organisations and associations supported through Parish Council grant funding during 2025-2026 include:

- East Hants Area CAB
- Liss Youth Centre (The Crossover)
- Liss Area Historical Society
- Liss Scouts
- Home Start Butser
- Rake Village Hall
- LUPIN
- St Mary's Church
- Liss Community Association (The Triangle)
- Liss Heart Charity

- Liss Luncheon Club

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

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is funding generated from new development in the parish. A proportion of the levy paid by developers is allocated to the Parish Council and can be used to support local infrastructure, facilities or projects that help address the impact of development and benefit the community.

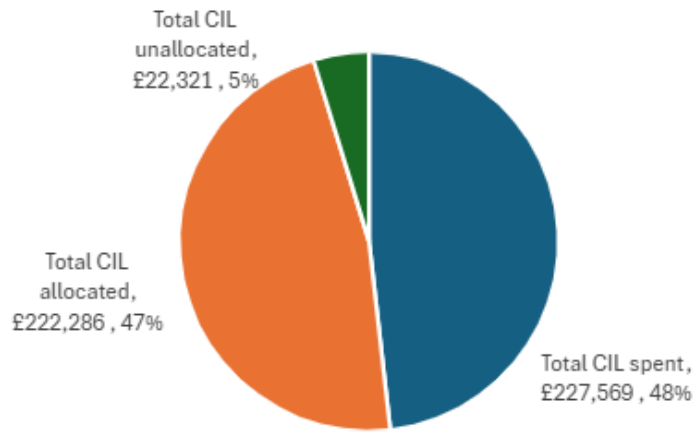
The Parish Council must spend these funds in accordance with CIL regulations and report annually on how the money has been used.

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

<b>CIL Funding</b>	
Total CIL received	£ 472,175
Total CIL spent	£ 227,569
Total CIL allocated	£ 222,286
Total CIL unallocated	£ 22,321

<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
Ecological appraisal of all sites	£ 3,227
Triangle Centre - paving	£ 5,040
Newman Collard MUGA	£ 8,050
Riverside Walk improvements	£ 6,882
Village centre improvements	£ 37,572
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 34,427
Green space projects	£ 1,656

<b>Allocated</b>	
MUGA at Newman Collard	£ 41,950
Village centre improvements	£ 142,429
Green space projects	£ 3,844
Liss Forest recreation ground improvements	£ 5,573
Table Tennis tables at Liss Forest and Newman Collard	£ 10,355
West Liss pavilion - solar	£ 1,150
Triangle Centre - LED lighting	£ 3,984
Village Hall - window replacement	£ 13,000



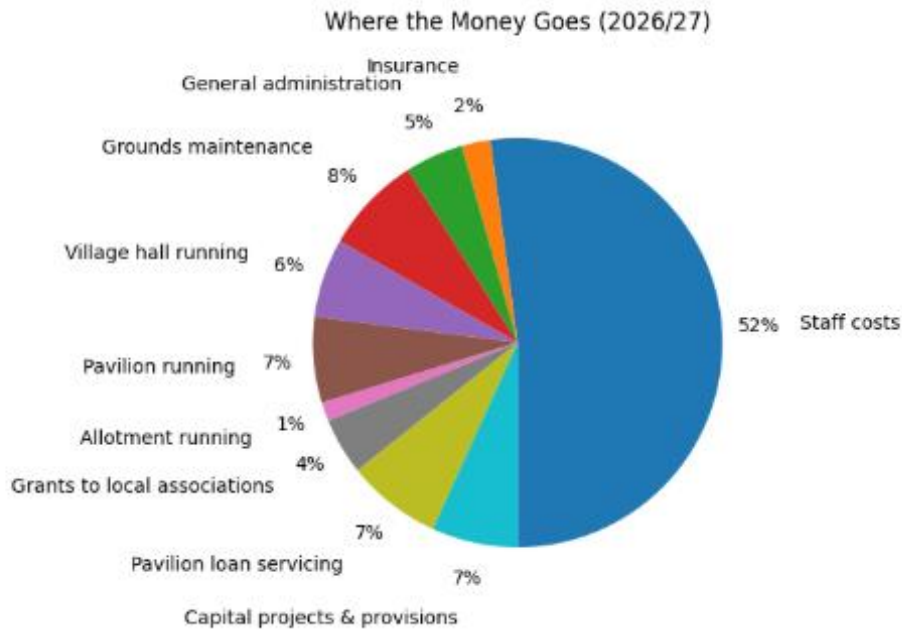
Allocations are provisional and any underspend will be released for future projects.

**Budget 2026-2027**

Budgeted expenditure for 2026-2027 is as follows:

	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	% change
<b>Budget:</b>					
Staff cost	138.3	156.6	171.3	191.7	11%
Insurance	8.3	8.7	8.5	8.4	-1%
General administration	13.9	15.1	15.4	16.9	9%
Grounds maintenance	31.9	30.9	30.4	28.4	-7%
Village Hall running cost	26.3	27.1	29.9	22.9	-30%
Pavilion running cost	24.8	25.8	19.8	24.9	20%
Allotment running cost	0.7	5.2	2.0	5.5	64%
Grants to local associations	10.3	14.5	16.6	16.5	0%
Pavilion loan servicing	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	0%
Capital projects and provisions	10.0	20.0	17.0	25.0	32%
	292.0	331.3	338.4	367.7	8%
<b>Funded by:</b>					
Precept	254.1	263.6	270.6	280.0	3%
Interest and other receipts	0.0	20.0	22.8	25.8	12%
Charity income	37.9	43.8	45.0	61.9	27%
Transfer to/from reserves	0.0	3.9	0.0		
	292.0	331.3	338.4	367.7	

Expenditure can be further summarised as follows:



Staff costs account for 52% of the total budget and include all salary, employer National Insurance and employer pension cost. Staff costs also include an increase to salaries in accordance with national guidelines for public sector pay rates.

Contributions are expected to be made to the Liss Village Hall, Liss Recreation Ground and Parish Allotments charities. These are all registered charities, which are accounted for separately in accordance with financial regulations.

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

The Parish Council has set a precept of £280k for 2026-2027 and the charge per Band D dwelling will therefore be £103.92 per year compared with £100.38 in 2025-2026. This is an increase of £3.54 or 3.53% per Band D dwelling.

**Committee**

The audit of the 2024-2025 accounts was carried out in April 2025 by Lightatouch, the independent internal auditor and approved at the Parish Council meeting on 16 June 2025. BDO Legal Law Practitioners, the Parish Council’s appointed external auditor, signed the final clearance of the accounts in September 2025.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members – Cllrs Keith Budden, Paddy Payne, Chris Mort, Clive Olley and Andy Smith - for their dedication during the year.

I’d also like to make special mention of Sarah Smith and Rebecca Lawrence for taking on the duties and responsibilities of the Responsible Finance Officer in April 2025 and for making it look effortless.

Cllr Williams summarised the report by stating that LPC is in a good position financially, with expenditure in line with budget, and healthy reserves. The balanced budget allows for some future proofing of existing assets. Funding had been received from Cllr James and Cllr Mullenger for works to the Riverside Walk and solar panels on Liss Pavilion.

## **6. Liss Parish Council Draft Action Plan for 2026/27**

During the Council year 2026/27 Liss Parish Council (LPC) will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain, improve and promote the use of recreation grounds, open spaces, the Village Hall and Liss Pavilion.
- Maximise income through increased rental from hirers, In Post and food vans.
- 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, Hampshire County Council and local government reorganisation.
- Engage with the community (parishioners, local businesses, community groups and organisations in Liss), and maintain an up-to-date website and social media presence in the village, in line with the Liss Parish Council 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 to improve facilities, the local environment, and the social and economic wellbeing of 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, induction and ongoing support for staff and councillors.
- Maintain good governance, including adhering 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).
- Compile, review and update LPC policies as and when necessary, in line with legislative requirements.
- Decide priorities for the use of CIL funds allocated directly to LPC, drawing on previous and future community engagement, and accessing other sources of investment, including SDNPA CIL.

Key projects for 2026/2027 include:

## **Highways priorities**

- Explore options for highways improvements with HCC, in particular on Andlers Ash Road and Forest Road.
- Secure a replacement speed indicator device and implement a deployment schedule.

## **Facilities priorities**

### *Recreation*

- Install a table tennis table at Newman Collard Park and Liss Forest Recreation Ground.

### *Environmental*

- Contribute to nature recovery through green space projects to enhance biodiversity and protect the environment, including:
  - the installation of 27 bird and 15 bat boxes across LPC managed sites.
  - clearance works to the woodland to the rear of Liss Forest Recreation Ground.
  - working with EHDC under license to enable the Riverside Walk volunteer group to assist with the general management of the Riverside Walk.

## **Charities priorities**

### *Buildings*

- Complete all 'urgent' works to the Village Hall and Pavilion in line with the Building Condition surveys carried out in September 2025. Start work on 'necessary' areas.
- Carry out the re-decoration of the interior of the Pavilion.
- Consider further actions to work towards achieving Net Zero in the Village Hall and Pavilion, improving the quality and performance of the buildings by making them more environmentally friendly, e.g. through glazing improvements.

### *Allotments*

- Continue the improvement programme to enhance the allotment sites by re-marking plots at Kelseys and Lower Green.

### *Environmental*

- Contribute to nature recovery through green space projects to enhance bio-diversity and protect the environment, including:
  - the move towards rewilding Fernhills East allotment site and returning Princes Bridge allotment site to wetland.

### *Governance*

- Agree supplementary governing documents with the Charity Commission.

## **Village Centre Enhancement**

- Engage with partners (e.g. Hampshire County Council, East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Network Rail) and residents regarding the enhancement of the village centre.
- Pursue funding for the railway platform extension.

The action plan will be in draft format until it is signed off at the next Council meeting in April. Any comments/amendments regarding it should be sent to the Clerk. One parishioner requested that an additional action relating to the governance of the Newman Collard Playing Fields Trust could be included in the plan.

## **7. Village Centre re-development update**

Cllr A Smith, Chair of the Highways Committee informed parishioners that the main focus of the village centre improvement work had been technical feasibility studies and costing works. A report with preliminary drawings has been just been received from Hampshire County Council. This will be shared with LPC councillors prior to a public engagement event which will be held after the May elections. The event will inform parishioners on latest developments and how views from the public engagement event last year had been taken into account.

## **8. Parishioners questions**

The following questions were raised by parishioners:

One parishioner asked whether the table tennis table at West Liss was money well spent, and whether it made financial sense to purchase another two for other locations. Cllr Budden stated that the existing table tennis table was popular and used by people of all ages.

One parishioner asked why the Budget for 2026/27 shows 'charity income' rather than 'rental income' as it had done in previous years. Cllr Williams stated that this now included staff time not just income from rental.

One parishioner asked whether the Village Hall covered its costs. Cllr Williams stated that the nature of Charities meant that premises were never expected to be self-sustaining and were subsidised by the Parish Council.

One parishioner questioned the 11% increase in staffing costs. Cllr Williams stated that the increase was due to a wage increase aligned with the national wage framework and increases to the national insurance scheme and pensions.

One parishioner questioned the state of the bridges at the Riverside Walk, and asked about joined up working with EHDC. Cllr Payne stated that all of the bridges had been surveyed, EHDC had the funds to repair them, and all would be fixed in due course. He reported that volunteers for the Riverside Walk had been taking instructions from EHDC who were being more proactive with the site.

One parishioner asked whether there was any intention to consult the public about whether or not they wanted the Village Centre improvements to go ahead. Cllr A. Smith stated that the Village Centre project had been identified as a priority in the Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted following a referendum in the parish where over 87% of voters approved it, and so there is clear public backing for the project.

LPC were working with Hampshire County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority to ensure improvements align with their policies so that funding bids could be made to CIL and the Mayoral Investment Fund, amongst other sources of grant monies. Cllr Smith confirmed that it was not envisaged that the precept would be used to fully fund delivery of the village centre master plan.

## **9. Update from Hampshire County Council**

Prior to presenting his report, Cllr Oppenheimer, County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers, shared his memories of the last 9 years, saying what an honour it had been to represent the area, and how much he had enjoyed attending annual parish meetings.

### **County Councillor Report to Parishes 2025/26**

#### **1. New budget approved by County Council**

In February, the County Council approved its annual budget which included approval of a 4.99% increase in Council Tax. While we are mindful of the cost-of-living pressures our residents face, this increase of £1.54 a week on average will allow us to keep safeguarding vital services for children at risk of harm, our growing older population, and people with disabilities and additional needs. By continuing to make savings and to transform the way we operate, we want to be able to limit the scale of any future council tax increases.

Alongside the revenue budget, Councillors have also approved the County Council's £971 million capital programme for 2026/27 to 2028/29, funded largely through developer contributions and Government grants. The agreed programme includes:

- £178m for structural maintenance of roads and bridges
- £216m for Integrated Transport Plan schemes
- £187m for new and extended school buildings
- £49m to support High Needs provision
- £71m for children's social care, including a new secure children's home
- £124m for condition-based improvements to school buildings
- £47m for waste and recycling infrastructure to improve recycling services

#### **2. A £633m Boost for Hampshire's Schools**

At a time when councils up and down the country are teetering on the brink, Hampshire is doing something rather extraordinary: investing hundreds of millions of pounds in the future of our children. In February, Hampshire County Council also approved a £633 million capital programme for new schools, better facilities, and vital improvements to children's services. Ten new schools — including two special schools — and hundreds of additional specialist SEND places will be delivered across the county.

This is only possible because of the careful, responsible financial management we've maintained for years. Hampshire has kept its books balanced, protected taxpayers' money, and ensured we can still invest where it truly matters. This programme will deliver:

- ◆ New mainstream and special schools in growing communities
- ◆ Over 390 new specialist SEND places
- ◆ Major upgrades to school buildings and early years settings
- ◆ Investment in Best Start Family Hubs
- ◆ Support for foster carers and adaptations for children with disabilities

This is long-term, serious investment — the kind that shapes a county for generations. And it's being delivered because this council has chosen to plan ahead, spend wisely, and protect Hampshire's future. I'm proud of what we're achieving for our young people. This is what responsible leadership looks like — and Hampshire's families deserve nothing less.

### 3. Hampshire Highways

I would like to acknowledge that this has been a challenging year for Hampshire Highways. In fact, it has been the worst year since I was elected nine years ago in 2017. On behalf of everyone at Hampshire County Council I would like to say sorry to all residents for the poor state of the roads so far this year.

What has made this year so bad is the persistent rain combined with overnight freezing. It is impossible to fix potholes properly when it is raining, or when the road surface is below 8 degrees. As you all know, there has been no let-up since Christmas. This has never happened before. As soon as we get a dry fortnight, I am confident that the teams will get out there and address all the defects rapidly. We have brought in extra crews and additional equipment such as dragon patchers.

We have truly excellent people at all levels in Hampshire County Council. They are professional, hardworking and conscientious. They are doing their very best to rectify the situation in challenging circumstances.

The problems arise due to increasingly wet winters, more vehicles, heavier vehicles, and a lack of routine investment. Given the impacts of climate change, I believe we should now be routinely resurfacing ALL of Hampshire's 5,500 miles of road every seven years. This would make our roads more resilient to the changing weather. To do this would probably cost ten times what we currently spend on Highways (which is around £60m per year). Unfortunately, there is no short-term prospect of this happening.

Sadly this means we will be hostages to the weather in Hampshire until we get more funding for our roads.

#### 4. Devolution and Local Government Reform

The challenge of fixing our road infrastructure and calming traffic will be a key issue for the future Mayor of Hampshire. For absolutely no good reason, the Labour Government has delayed our Mayoral election until 2028. I found this incredibly disappointing. We really need a Mayor to fight our corner and to lobby for more investment in infrastructure.

We also need Local Government Reform, which will help to close our budget gap by delivering savings and efficiencies. I sincerely hope that we can stick to the current timetable and hold elections to the new Unitaries in May 2027. At present, there is no certainty about that.

By the way, I think Hampshire County Councillors have been vindicated in our decision to refuse to request a delay to our elections this year. Ministers were encouraging us to do so but we thought it was wrong and we stood firm. Our principled stance was right, and the Government was forced into a u-turn on their election delays. There is now real concern that the process of LGR will be delayed due to the Labour mix-up over elections. As a result of the mix-up, most of the department's LGR funding (£67m) has had to go to the 30 areas which now need to organise elections at short notice. That means less for us.

I have decided to take a break from politics so I am not standing for election in May. In due course I shall look forward to wishing all the best to my successor as County Councillor.

#### 5. Update: Hampshire Forest Partnership

Since it was founded by me in 2022, the Hampshire Forest Partnership (HFP) has now delivered 177,008 trees across over 500 sites in Hampshire. We are well on our way to achieving our target of one million trees by 2050!

For context, the Trees for the Downs scheme run by the South Downs National Park has delivered 117,700 trees across 150 sites in Sussex and Hampshire since 2019, including 3,500 disease-resistant elms. The 177,008 total includes the following key delivery strands:

- Hedgerow planting: 118,842 hedge whips, equating to approximately 23.8km of hedgerow, delivered through Shoots Along the Routes and Linking Leaves (funded through Trees Outside Woodland Fund (TOW), Hampshire County Council (HCC), and partner contributions).
- Community orchards: 42 new community orchards, delivering 765 fruit and nut trees, funded through the King's Coronation Living Heritage Programme.
- Mini forests: 14 mini forests, delivering 16,190 trees, funded through the King's Coronation Living Heritage Programme and other partners.

- Disease-resistant elm trees: 5,840 trees, delivered through multiple funding schemes over successive years, enabling this important project to continue annually.
- Standard trees in parks and public open spaces: 457 trees (included within the Linking Leaves and Elm delivery totals), funded through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) and Trees Outside Woodland Fund (TOW).
- Trees for gardens: 4,439 trees, funded solely by Hampshire County Council. Individual trees: 30,932 individual trees delivered through Shoots Along the Routes and Linking Leaves (LATF and TOW).

All of the above tree planting has been delivered through the Hampshire Forest Partnership's strategic bidding for external funding, complimented by some HCC funding, linked to countywide programmes such as 'Shoots Along the Routes' and 'Linking Leaves', which focus on strategically important habitat and connectivity projects across Hampshire, working with farmers, businesses, charities and local communities.

## 6. Local Nature Reserves

I would like to highlight the opportunity for Town and Parish Councils to create Local Nature Reserves. Nature recovery is a key priority in the new Partnership Management Plan of the South Downs National Park. Town and Parish Councils can play a crucial role in nature recovery by identifying pockets of land which can be converted into Local Nature Reserves. As well as supporting local wildlife, this can also become a wonderful amenity for the community.

Often there are forgotten or neglected bits of land which people have stopped noticing. This was the case with the Tor Way triangle in Petersfield, which we have now renamed the Love Lane Space for Nature. I would encourage you to look closely at hidden parts of your Parishes and see whether a Local Nature Reserve could be created. It is easy to designate a Local Nature Reserve, but you do have to consult Natural England by emailing them at [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk). You should state that you want to declare a local nature reserve and include a management plan detailing:

- Site map and ownership of the land
- any nature reserve agreements, leases or partnerships
- why the local nature reserve site was chosen: aims and objectives
- biodiversity management and environmental education
- community participation, access and visitor management
- costs and funding arrangements

## 7. Tackling Problem Pavement Parking in Hampshire

Pavement parking is one of the issues I hear about regularly — and for good reason. When cars block pavements, it isn't just inconvenient. It can be dangerous and deeply unfair to people who rely on clear, safe routes: wheelchair users, those with sight loss, older

residents, and parents with buggies and prams. It also damages our verges and leaves some communities looking uncared for.

The Government has now confirmed that new legislation is on the way to give councils like Hampshire County Council far greater control over pavement parking. This is something I've long argued for, and I welcome the change.

Under the new proposals:

- Local transport authorities will be able to prohibit pavement parking across their areas, rather than dealing with it street by street.
- A new regulatory framework will allow councils to tailor solutions to local needs, including accessibility and disabled parking.

From 2026, councils will also be able to enforce against unnecessary obstruction of pavements as an interim step, giving us more ability to act where parking is clearly causing problems.

Most drivers are considerate, but the small minority who park without thinking create real barriers for others. These new powers will help us protect vulnerable residents, keep pavements clear, and prevent the sort of verge damage that blights too many neighbourhoods.

#### 8. Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)

The noise and nuisance caused by motorbikes and 4x4s continues to be a blight on our communities and our green lanes. I have lobbied persistently on this issue and there has been a change of policy at Hampshire County Council. We now have more winter closures, more gating and more noticeboards.

We also have a proposed Traffic Regulation Order from Hampshire County Council to close Buttons Lane in Colemore. This is important progress but more needs to be done. The damage and disturbance is completely unacceptable. I am grateful to all the Parish Councillors who keep up the pressure on this issue.

#### 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 2026. As you know, the County Councillor grant pot was reduced to £5,000 for this municipal year.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Greatham Community Hub	Facilities and Shelter for Coffee Hub	£750
Petersfield Cricket Club	Replacement of Heath Pavilion Roof	£800

Friends of Sheet School	Wildlife garden design, refurbishment and re-generation	£750
Steep Film Society In Memory Of Sir Alec Guinness	Replacement Projector	£300
Froxfield and Privett Garden Club	Froxfield Village Hall Window Boxes	£100
Hawkley Parish Hall	Hall redecoration and window Replacement	£500
1st Liss Scouts	Outdoor activity - equipment refresh	£500
Free Shop Friday (Petersfield)	To purchase a new main door to our building.	£300
Liss Archaeology	Improve surveying capability - purchase of an Emlid Reach device	£500
Families of Liss Schools (FLIS PTA)	Liss Schools playground improvement plan	£500
		£5,000

My final monthly County Councillor report will be sent out on 1 April 2026.

Cllr Budden thanked Cllr Oppenheimer on behalf of LPC for all his work over his 9 years in post.

One parishioner highlighted the fact that there were a lot of big pot holes about locally, especially in Liss Forest. Cllr Oppenheimer explained that persistent rain had been the problem, and that temporary repairs didn't last. They should be fixed properly once there is a dry spell. Cllr Oppenheimer outlined the need for more investment for routine resurfacing of roads, and that with more cars, heavier vehicles and the increased cost of materials, the cost of fixing the roads has gone up.

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

District Councillor Roger Mullenger presented the following report:

The key points for the year:

- I have held surgeries every month, with Cllr Ian James. The issues raised varied significantly. Often those provided by Hampshire County Council, particularly, parking, pavements, drainage and potholes. There is significant dissatisfaction with the poor signage of road works and closures by utility companies and HCC.
- EHDC and PTC issues have also been investigated. I have tried to deal with all casework, sharing items with Ian James to avoid duplication.
- The EHDC budget for the current year, is more or less on target.
- The new planning system for areas outside the SDNP has had problems, taking resources away from planning staff which has affected the time taken to complete applications for all areas.

- All planning applications have been reviewed and commented where necessary for key issues.
- The preparations for the food waste collection started last year, and should have started in April, but will now be in October. I believe that preparations started too late, which I flagged up in my July 2025 report.
- A Liberal Democrat motion was passed unanimously to improve the protection of chalk stream fed streams & rivers. This campaign has now reached parliament.
- I was part of an EHDC "task & finish group" to try to understand the causes, and propose some solutions, to fly-tipping problems.

#### Looking forward

- The new budget has just been passed, although all councillors present not part of the administration voted against. The EHDC element will increase by £5 per year for a band D house (3%).
- The next stage of the local plan revision of the SDNP Local Plan will go to committee tomorrow, and be open for final consultation in May, confirming the existing and new sites in Liss.
- The new local plan for the non-SDNP area should come to the Reg 19 stage in July, the final consultation before going to the inspector next year. The current version is many years out of date and adds to problems outside the SDNP area.
- The county elections will be in May. We expect to hear about the outcome of the LGR consultation this month. If it goes ahead there will be Unitary elections in May next year – and lot of hard work required by all authorities and councillors.
- The councillor grants scheme is being continued from April with each councillor having £7,000 to allocate, plus £3,000 going into a climate pot. There may be a change in emphasis in priorities, with councillors due to be briefed next week.

Cllr Mullenger added that from April 2027 there would be a new collection of plastic recyclables, and that a new £50million waste centre was being built by HCC.

District Councillor Ian James presented the following information:

#### Personal statement.

I start my report with a personal statement. Because of the internal machinations of the local Green Party I will no longer be a member of the Green Party group of the EHDC. I will remain the same person with the same political principles and ethos. I will continue to represent the residents of Liss as an independent councillor.

#### Local Government Reorganisation

The most significant council related event of this last year was Local Government Reorganisation. In Hampshire we will see both all the district councils and the county council disbanded. They will be replaced by three or four unitary councils. Just at this moment we do not know the composition. The government decision is due very soon though, we should know before the end of March.

Cllr Roger Mullenger and I held two workshops on the issue.

Elections for the new unitary councils will be held in 2027. The new councils will run in parallel with the existing councils for a crossover period of 12 months. In 2028 the unitary councils become vested (fully operational) and the existing district councils and county council are disbanded. A consequence is that current district councillors will serve for an extra year and the election due in 2027 will not be run.

The county council election will be run this year after being postponed from 2025. New county council councillors will serve for just two years, to 2028.

#### Casework

Cllr Mullenger and I continued our joint monthly open surgeries (First Saturday of the month). Issues raised were many and various, often county council related – potholes for instance. We shared this caseload to avoid duplication of council officers' resource.

I will highlight one topic – Hillbrow Road car park.

For many years residents have assumed that they could park in the yellow bays at the bottom end of the car park without any time limit. In fact the limit is 24 hours. The council suddenly started to enforce this limit. This has left local residents with nowhere to legally park. The council has agreed to improve the signage and make parking permits available. Until this happens enforcement penalties will not be issued.

#### Planning

The council has changed its planning system. This has not been a success and has led to confusion and delays. As we live in the South Downs National Park this should not have affected us because our planning system was not changed. However the EHDC act as agents for the National Park and there has been some spill over. Resolving the issue is still an ongoing project.

I reviewed and commented on all local planning applications.

The new revision of the South Downs National Park local plan is due for its final consultation this coming year. This final revision will determine development sites within Liss.

#### Food waste collection

The collection of food waste should have started in April as mandated by the government. Of the nine district councils in Hampshire, EHDC was only one of the two that was not ready. Instead the service will not start until September (the other late starter, the New Forest, will see their collections start in June).

#### Councillor approved grants

One of the most satisfying aspects of a councillor's function is being able to approve grants for local community projects. I am very pleased to say the community made full use of this opportunity and managed to put all of it to good use this last year.

As of last year I will have £10,000 available for this coming year. £3,000 of this will go to the Climate Action Fund which the council will control. So I will have £7,000 to help local projects. A maximum of £1,000 per project is allowed. I am hoping that the community will be able to use all of the £7,000 again this year.

### Council Tax 2026/2027

For the second year running the EHDC part of the council tax for the standard band D property will be raised to a maximum allowed of £5.00 to £156.92 (8.4% of total council tax). The charges for services (such as garden waste collection and car parking) were raised by the inflation rate of 4.6% based on the Retail Price Index measured of August 2025. It should be noted that this month produced the highest inflation rate of 2025. The Consumer Price Inflation index for the same month was 3.8%.

Cllr Williams asked whether there would be any transparency between EHDC and Norse. Cllr Mullenger stated that a split between income and expenditure had been requested.

### **11. Presentation of the Villager of the Year Award 2026**

Cllr Budden acknowledged the work of the following runners up for Villager of the Year:

- Nigel Drury
- Alan Harris
- Bridget Hughes
- Cliff Salmons
- Dave Scarlett

The title of Villager of the Year 2026 for his services to the Triangle Centre, Lupin, and Petersfield Golf Club, went to Chris Dowty.

Cllr Budden thanked everyone for attending the Annual Parish Meeting.

The meeting was closed at 20:00.