

DRAFT

CHAIRMAN: Ron Dark

CLERK: Jenny Hollington

MINUTES OF THE SHEET ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL 2023 AT 7.00 P.M. AT SHEET VILLAGE HALL

PRESENT: Cllrs. Gail Martin (in the Chair) Alan Biddlecombe Brian Bird
Tony Clear Robin Forrest Dave McKinney
Chris Wilton

IN ATTENDANCE: Network Rail Representatives; John Aderale, Dave Newman, and Jamie Evers
Nick Drew (District Councillor)
Jenny Hollington (Clerk)

There were approximately 20 members of the public present at the meeting.

APA23/01 **APOLOGIES** - Apologies had been received from Ron Dark, Chairman of Sheet Parish Council, and Russell Oppenheimer, County Councillor

APA23/02 **MINUTES – ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY 2022** – The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Thursday, 12th May 2022 had been circulated and were approved and signed.

In Ron Dark's absence, the meeting was Chaired by Cllr. Gail Martin, Vice-Chair of Sheet Parish Council who introduced the Network Rail representatives to the meeting and explained that refreshments would be served after their presentation and before the Parish Council's annual report.

APA23/03 **IMPROVEMENT WORKS – SHEET & KINGSFERN DEN LEVEL CROSSINGS** – John Aderale explained that improvement works to both crossings will be undertaken over the summer to upgrade them to 4-barrier crossings to make them safer. Both crossings have a current risk rating of 2 (very high) and as part of the work the signalling will also be renewed. It is anticipated that both gates will be shut for 5 days for the work to be undertaken but by carrying out the works during July (Sheet) and September (Kingsfernden) it is hoped there won't be too much disruption. Network Rail will ensure that residents are kept fully informed of road closures via a letter drop nearer the time. In the meantime, background works have been going on at Sheet Level Crossing since February on the land to the left of the crossing where it is intended to install a shipping container to replace the current structures. He confirmed that the new container at Kingsfernden will be sited further towards Sheet, behind the current building. The new barriers will be automatic and will be monitored, making them much safer than current. However, the 4-barrier down time will be longer than currently - approximately 4 times longer for 1 train and 3 times as long for trains travelling in both directions – this is to give drivers green aspects further down the line.

Members of the public expressed consternation at the thought of the shipping containers being installed and questioned whether this is appropriate at sites within the National Park. John Aderale explained that this is covered under permitted development, but that planning permission will be sought. The Network Rail representatives present at the meeting agreed that screening and consideration of painting the container in Forest Green or similar would be appropriate to ensure that the container blended into the landscape, rather than stand out.

Following the presentation refreshments were served and Network Rail representatives left the meeting.

APA23/04 **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS** – After the refreshments break, Cllr. Martin opened the second part of the meeting (a review of the year) by introducing Parish Councillors – she explained that Cllr. Tony Clear had decided to stand down at the May election but that the remaining 7 councillors had stood for re-election and this had been uncontested. Tony's resignation means there will be a space on the Parish Council, and it is hoped to co-opt a new member in June. Tony Clear will be very much missed by all at Sheet Parish Council but has promised to continue to plant up the beds at the Village Hall and the Village Green and to be on the end of the phone if needed – a very big thank you was extended to Tony for his hard work.

Cllr. Martin also introduced new member of Sheet Parish Council, Cllr. Dave McKinney, who had been co-opted during the year – Dave comes with many years' experience, as previous Chairman of Stroud Parish Council and as a District Councillor.

In reviewing the year, Cllr. Martin recalled two very sad events– the death of much-loved village resident and ex-Parish Councillor, Will Glancy, and the tragic death of Maddie Lawrence – both events had cast a pall over the village but had also brought the village together to remember and celebrate their lives.

Happier events had included the Village Street Party to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee – grateful thanks were due to Jayne Flatt and Lesley Hall of the Village Association for their hard work in arranging the festivities -.and the new Winter Warmer Café at the Village Hall had also provided a very welcoming environment on Friday afternoons during the cold spell. The Village Film Club continues to draw people together from across the parish and thanks are due to Ric and Jayne Flatt and Brian Bird for making the evenings so successful. Vaughan Clarke continues to edit the Sheet News which is delivered twice yearly to all residents of Sheet. Many of these village activities are made possible via grants from the Parish Council, East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council

APA23/04 **FINANCE REPORT** – Cllr. Wilton introduced himself as a member of the finance committee and gave a brief overview of the accounts for 22-23. He explained that the precept 22-23 had been fixed at the same rate per household as previous years and noted that this amount has not changed since the inception of Sheet Parish Council. The Parish Council accounts are currently very healthy due to savings in budgeted capital projects – eg the budgeted purchase of adult outside gym equipment (£10,000) had not gone ahead – plus there had been an unexpected receipt of £13,000 CIL funding (which will be used towards the costs of the road projects on the London Road and Village Street - due to be completed in the summer 2023).

In general, figures for 22-23 were broadly on budget for the year. One notable exception is utility bills at the Village Hall where the cost of electricity has gone up by 60%, gas 186% and water 25% - however, these increases are currently manageable within the precept. The cost of the bin contract had also been slightly higher than expected due to an increase from 1-collection per week, to 2-collections per week over the summer and the cost of the new grass cutting contract has also gone up for 22-23. The financial year has ended with total reserves of £202,954, made up of:

Deposits	£ 6,480.00
CIL Funds	£13,497.00
<u>Earmarked Reserves:</u>	
Asset Refurb	£50,000.00
Church Field	£30,000.00
Old Billiard Room	£20,000.00
Budgeted Capital Projects	£27,000.00
<u>General Reserve</u>	£55,976.00

Cllr. Wilton noted that the accounts were still subject to audit, but would be made available via the Parish Council website once complete– www.sheetparishcouncil.gov.uk

APA23/04 **AN OVERVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES**

Planning - Sheet Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all planning applications within the parish and views have been made known on a steady stream of applications – Chris Wilton takes the lead on these on behalf of the P.C.

Roads and Traffic – Cllr. Martin outlined details of the two Community Funded Initiatives (CFIs) which are due to be carried out this summer – one to create a new courtesy crossing on the London Road to enable better access to Sheet Common, this will be installed in conjunction with new road linings and village gates designed to slow traffic; the other project is to widen the pavement alongside the Church to enable better access for wheelchair users and parents with toddlers and pushchairs and to narrow the entrance to Village Street at the Farnham Road to prevent large vehicles accessing the narrow lane.

In addition to the above projects, Sheet Parish Council has agreed to buy 2 Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) to help slow the traffic in Pulens Lane and London Road and it is hoped that these will be up and running by the summer. Cllr. Martin is working with Cllr. McKinney to review the proposals for traffic calming in Pulens Lane, via the Petersfield Strategy Group - £300,000 has been set aside for these works. Final plans are being released in the summer and it is hoped that they will be available for general view.

In the background, the Council continues to consider the need for a rural village car park to reduce congestion around the Village Green - it had hoped that this might be addressed via a proposal for Church Field, but this is now not looking likely. The Council also continues to work with Hampshire Highways on the condition of Mill Lane (which is due to be resurfaced), flooding and blocked drains, and the large number of potholes, and with Southern Water on sewage leaks on both Mill Lane and Pulens Lane.

Sheet Common – Alan Biddlecombe explained that he has responsibility for the Common which is managed for nature as well as people. He is a regular volunteer with the Hampshire Monday Group who have carried out extensive management work on the Common, clearing brambles, footpaths and fallen trees, and this year, they have created a dead hedge around the BMX track. He noted that there are now far more wildflowers on the Common including bluebells and foxgloves. He also engages regularly with the BMX user group to ensure the track is kept in good condition and in line with regulations.

Sheet Allotments – Robin Forrest explained that he has responsibility for the allotments where there are over 100 plots. The allotments have provided a great source of enjoyment for their owners over the last couple of years -and there has been high demand. Steve Elliott, a member of the STAA Committee has been a great help at the site – helping with plot inspections and small maintenance jobs.

Village Green – Everyone will have seen the new, circular, bench installed in memory of much-loved resident and ex-Councillor, Will Glancy – a plaque will follow shortly. In addition, the condition of the Horse Chestnut tree is constantly monitored – a further survey is due in the coming months – and Tony Clear continues to keep the planting area around the Village sign looking fabulous.

Sheet Recreation Ground – The play equipment is visually checked fortnightly by Robin Forrest, with quarterly checks being carried out by Elite Play Inspections Ltd (who also monitor the BMX Track). The children from Stepping Stones will shortly be out and about cleaning litter in the area.

Millennium Field – Tony Clear explained that he looks after the Millennium Field. He reported that the whips planted two years ago, are now faring better following the past two dry summers. In the community orchard two of the trees have had to be replaced. Wildflowers, including daffodils and snowdrops, are doing well.

Sheet Village Hall - The Village Hall continues to operate smoothly and is run by a Management Committee comprising Gail Martin and Chris Wilton. This year, the hall has benefitted from an exterior coat of paint as well as an upgraded broadband service.

The Old Billiard Room – This is currently being used as a storage facility for the Lion & Unicorn Players and Cllr. McKinney explained that he had been tasked to see if better use could be made of the building. In June 2022 pre-planning advice was sought from EHDC and their view was that conversion of the building into a single dwelling would be likely to be acceptable. As a result, a planning application for the conversion of the OBR has been submitted. Once the application has been decided the Parish Council will look at this in more detail including a full cost analysis.

SDNPA – Parish Priority Statement – Cllr. McKinney explained the purpose of a PPS and why it is important for Sheet to take this forward. The PPS will require community engagement which will be carried out over the summer.

APM23/05 **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – County Councillor, Russell Oppenheimer, was unable to attend the meeting – however, he had sent through his report which is appended to the Minutes. Russell has been County Councillor for 6 years now and Sheet P.C. is grateful to him for his on-going support.

APM23/06 **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT** – District Councillor, Nick Drew, introduced himself and explained that his Ward includes Froxfield, Privett, Steep, Steep marsh as well as Sheet. He spoke on the following items:

- Elections – Cllr. Drew reminded residents that ID will be required to vote this year.
- Refuse collections – EHDC has recently changed contractor and will now be working directly with Norse which will give more ability to engage to resolve issues.
- Speeding and Noise – Speed is a big issue in the local villages, and it is important to have many points where speeding vehicles are reminded that they are within villages. Nick is a member of the Speed and Noise Committee led by Donna Jones – great work has been done to prevent speeding on the A32 and the A272 and it is hoped this will have a positive impact on Sheet.
- Grants – District Councillors are allocated a £4,500 annual budget to allocate to projects in the local community – this year, Cllr. Drew approved a grant towards the Queen's Jubilee Street Party in Village Street - a great event which had brought many residents together.

Cllr. Drew thanked members of Sheet Parish Council for their hard work and commented what a lovely community Sheet is.

APM23/07 **OPEN FORUM** – There were no specific comments – residents present confirmed that they were happy with the work of the Parish Council.

ANNUAL HCC REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER

TO ALL PARISH COUNCILS IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS AND PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL – 22 MARCH 2023

Introduction

This annual report has been prepared for Annual Parish Meetings taking place between March and May 2023. As usual I will try to attend as many of the APMs as I possibly can!

A memorable year for Hampshire

The historic and emotional events of the last 12 months will live long in the memory. It has been an eventful municipal year with the monarchy at the heart of it:

- The County Council celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee across its services during the summer of 2022. The lighting of a beacon at QE Country Park was a very well attended event, along with events at other country parks and libraries. I also attended a moving Jubilee Citizenship ceremony held in the Great Hall in Winchester, directly underneath the Round Table. All Parishes held their own Platinum Jubilee events which were joyous community occasions.
- The sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September 2022 came as an enormous blow and all of Hampshire was greatly affected. Hampshire was always close to the Queen's heart. Hampshire was the place where the Queen spent her honeymoon and the County to which she came often to visit Her Armed Forces. The County Council helped residents to pay their respects to the late Monarch by providing public books of condolence at the Great Hall.
- HCC was then responsible for the co-ordination of the proclamation of King Charles III outside Winchester's Great Hall, as well as live-streaming the event to allow people to watch online.
- As the municipal year ends in May this year, HCC will put on a number of suitable events across the County to enable people to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles on 6 May 2023.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has been unsettling over the last year. I am proud that Hampshire has played an important role in supporting Ukrainians fleeing from the conflict. We have taken in the third highest number of refugees of all the English counties, not a bad record. This is predominantly thanks to the generosity of the Homes for Ukraine hosts, to whom we are all very grateful. HCC is providing extra support to Hampshire residents hosting Ukrainian guests as part of the Government's Scheme, with an additional £200 per month beyond the funding already provided by the Government.

HCC has also worked hard to help our Ukrainian guests to integrate. We launched a Ukraine Connects initiative at all our libraries and we have helped to develop language classes and skills support.

The severe weather has had an impact over the last year. We have seen a massive increase in flooding incidents across Petersfield Hangers, and a number of sewage overflows which are very distressing. The rain and freezing temperatures have also taken their toll on road surfaces. I think Hampshire Highways have done a great job in the circumstances.

The severe weather is likely to be a feature of our climate over the coming years. We have to learn to live with it. It is a reminder of the negative impacts of climate change, and we need to redouble our decarbonisation efforts. It is great to see community energy schemes springing up across the Petersfield Hangers division.

The last 12 months for me

* Back in May 2022 I was delighted to be appointed to the Countryside and Regulatory Services portfolio within the HCC Cabinet. I am responsible for five country parks, five National Nature Reserves, two farms and 81 countryside sites. I am also responsible for Trading Standards, Ceremonies and Registration, Hampshire Records Office and Hampshire Scientific Service. So there is plenty to keep me busy.

One of my passions is tree planting and I am delighted to be championing the Hampshire Forest Partnership. We have an ambitious target to plant one million trees by 2050, and we have made great strides over the last year. Ongoing support from Parishes is critical to ensure we keep up momentum.

Apart from boosting nature, storing carbon, preventing flooding, and improving natural beauty, tree-planting can also bring communities together. Young and old alike can get stuck in and then enjoy watching the trees grow with a real sense of pride. Our project officer at HCC would be pleased to hear from any Parish Council that would like to develop a tree-planting programme in their Parish. You can contact her at treeplanting@hants.gov.uk

In my HCC Countryside role, I have been proactive on the BOATs front (Byways Open to All Traffic). I am determined to restore the safety and tranquillity of our green lanes. At HCC we are developing an innovative new policy framework which will be published for scrutiny later this year. New gates, secure noticeboards and technology will be deployed under the new approach.

I am pleased to say that collaboration with the SDNPA on the BOATs issue is gathering pace now. We are anticipating being able to get some funding from their CIL pot and establishing joint working mechanisms amongst the Ranger teams. I met the SDNPA Chair Vanessa Rowlands last week and we were very much on the same page in our desire to keep up the momentum and make a difference. We are awaiting certain Government policy announcements on this issue, which I hope will also give us more tools to protect the byways which are so important in terms of maintaining access to the countryside for everyone.

Funds available for projects

May I take this opportunity to remind everyone that HCC has two funding streams available for Parish Councils. I would encourage Parishes to take advantage of these funds whilst they still exist by making applications in the coming year.

The **Rural Community Fund** supports Parish Councils, groups and organisations in rural Hampshire and small market towns. The fund can provide contributions of up to £5,000, with at least 50% match funding required. The grant fund provides support under the following four areas:

1. Climate Change Resilience (including Flood Alleviation);
2. Countryside (we want to help rural communities improve their local natural environment, enhance biodiversity or increase access to the countryside);
3. Rural Economy and Business (we want to help Rural Businesses and Community Enterprises grow, increase their productivity, and ultimately improve the services that are offered to communities);
4. Other – we are keen to support any other projects or initiatives that will help build community resilience and/or encourage self-help in rural areas.

The **Parish and Town Council Investment Fund** can provide up to £30k investment.

The funding can support schemes which:

- Respond to local needs and which can demonstrate an easing of pressure to County Council Services.
- We have a particular focus on improvements to Community Buildings to address carbon reduction and climate change resilience. E.g. Solar panels and insulation for village halls.

HCC Performance Highlights

I know that the financial crisis affecting local government is well understood by all Parish and Town Councillors. The increased cost of care and the increase in the number of elderly adults needing care has put pressure on budgets. In Hampshire we are lucky to have a County Council that is in a relatively strong position. We have a great team of officers who deliver for residents – day in, day out. We have substantial reserves which enable us to invest. And we continue to be able to prioritise young people by focusing on schools and skills.

There is a lot of other good stuff which goes on behind the scenes, some of which does not make it into press notices. I thought it would be worthwhile to take the opportunity to list some highlights from the last year at HCC which you may not have heard about:

- Hampshire Futures, which provides career guidance and support to young people, being awarded the Matrix Quality Standard for a third time. The service's delivery of information, advice and guidance was described as 'exemplary,' and the service's objectivity, impartiality, client focus and aspirational nature was also praised.

- The County Council investing in projects to help people dependent on alcohol and drugs, by increasing the capacity of the Criminal Justice and Substance Misuse Teams, commissioning a new specialist Alcohol Team for community-based treatment, and continuing its support for the harm reduction team.
- 100 library staff, across 10 Hampshire libraries, receiving 'Safe at Home' training to enable them to provide guidance and conduct sensitive conversations with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Library stock and IT resources in libraries were also updated to support victims of domestic abuse and direct them to other resources available to assist them. The project was nominated for a Police and Crime Commissioners Victim Services Award.
- The County Council launching its 'Keep Warm Keep Well' scheme to protect vulnerable people who are struggling with their day-to-day bills. The support available includes guidance on claiming free school meals and getting advice on managing finances, and links to warm spaces in Hampshire open to residents who may struggle to pay heating bills over the winter.
- All five of the County Council's Country Parks being re-awarded Green Flag status for 2022, plus a new Green Flag being awarded to Wellesley Woodland.
- Completion of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, delivering solar energy collection, building insulation, and boiler conversions at hundreds of schools, care homes, libraries, outdoor centres, and other publicly owned buildings across Hampshire.
- Shortlisting of Micheldever's highways materials recycling and reprocessing facility for Carbon Project of the Year in the 2022 Construction News Awards. It was praised for its approach to reducing the carbon cost of highways construction and maintenance.

I hope this gives a flavour of the progress that we are continually making at HCC, despite the financial challenges.

Grants awarded by me during the municipal year 2022-23

I always include a grants summary in my annual report. Please find overleaf a table showing all grant awards by me over the last year. I always do my best to achieve a geographical spread. I really appreciate it when Parish Councils put good projects to me, please keep it up!

I look forward to working with you all as your County Councillor over the 12 months ahead.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER

County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

LIST OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR GRANTS AWARDED BY ME DURING THE GRANT YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 2023

Organisation	Project Title	Project Description	Amount Awarded
Steep & Stroud Newsletter	Keeping communities informed and engaged	This application relates to the production of an enhanced monthly newsletter, distributed freely to the residents of the villages of Steep & Stroud in East Hampshire, and closely adjoining residents.	£400.00
Froxfield & Privett Parish Council	Parish Verge Cutting	To take on the verge cutting in the Parish of Froxfield & Privett with a view to cutting at a time to improve the biodiversity in the area.	£1,000.00
Home-Start Butser	Safeguarding Training	To provide Safeguarding Training for Home-Start Butser volunteers	£1,000.00
Petersfield Musical Festival	Petersfield Musical Festival 2023	Ten concerts in March, involving local choirs, orchestras, bands and schools, rehearsing and performing alongside professional musicians of local, national and international standing.	£500.00
Hawley Parish Hall	Hawley Playground Renovation	The current equipment was installed over 20 years ago and now requires complete replacement due to degradation of the wooden structures. The severity of the damage necessitates work starts in 3 weeks.	£1,000.00
Sheet Village community trust (Winter warmer cafe)	Sheet winter warmer cafe	To provide a free of charge Winter warmer cafe Friday pm in Sheet village hall throughout the coldest months.	£150.00
Energise South Downs	Solar PV for Bridge Meadows Liss	The aim of this project is to carry out a feasibility study for solar PV on 6 blocks of Flats which house 39 households.	£750.00
Liss Parish Council	Map of Liss village	The aim of a bespoke map of Liss is to signpost people (both visitors to and residents of Liss) to local facilities and showcase what the village has to offer.	£700.00
Newman collard playing fields trust	LED lighting upgrade to pavilion	To upgrade lighting installation in the pavilion building to led	£900.00

Stroud Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	Playground maintenance and ongoing improvement	£700.00
Ropley Parish Council	Improving Ropley Footpaths	Replace stiles with kissing gates to improve access to local footpath network. This is in line with Ropley Neighbourhood Plan	£900.00
TOTAL			£8,000.00

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