

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
Steep Parish Council
Held on Monday 2 March 2026 at 7.30pm
in Steep War Memorial Village Hall**

Present: Councillors Alison Driver (Chair), Charlotte Duthie (Vice), Shannon Askew, Robin Hollington, Terry Cook, Andrew Inkley, Andrew Howard, Barry Haywood and Paul Nayton.
District Councillor Nick Drew
Sam Marchant (Clerk)
1 member of the public

Minute Ref	Item
26/54	Apologies for absence No apologies for absence were received. County Councillor Oppenheimer was not present.
26/55	Declarations of interests Cllr Hollington declared an interest as his business was the supplier of the Councils email accounts.
26/56	Approval of minutes To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2 February 2026. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2 February were reviewed; they were then approved and signed by the Chair.
26/57	Public Comment Discussion points: A concern was raised by a resident regarding the Steep Village newsletter and a potential Parish Council newsletter. Councillors confirmed there has been no proposal to stop supplying the village newsletter with Parish Council reports. Discussion clarified the difference between: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The existing printed village newsletter, and• A potential Parish Council email circulation. It was noted that residents had been signing up for a Parish Council newsletter mailing list, but a public email newsletter had not yet been issued (other than possible website alerts). Agreement that digital communication should supplement the printed newsletter, not replace it. Suggestion raised that naming should avoid confusion; possible use of "Bulletin". Action: Clerk to draft and send a letter clarifying the council's position on the newsletter and confirming it will continue alongside any digital updates (SM) Consider naming options to avoid confusion.

26/58

County Councillor Report: to receive a report

Cllr Oppenheimer's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. (Appendix A)

It was noted that Cllr Oppenheimer will not continue after May.

26/59

District Councillor Report: to receive a report

Discussion points:

Annual budget review discussed:

- Expected council tax increase due to inflation and reduced central government funding.
- Council finances supported through investments and property revenue.
- Underspend in the previous year transferred to reserves/investments.
- Use of low-interest borrowing while earning higher interest on funds confirmed as legal and common practice.

Council Tax Relief continues for residents experiencing hardship.

Grant schemes would be available from April, and parishes encouraged to bring forward projects.

Winter Warmer group discussed; potential extension into Spring ("Spring Warmer") supported.

Brickworks / Steep Marsh planning concerns raised; South Downs National Park response being chased.

Potential escalation via press or MP if response not received.

Contact to be provided for SDNPA.

Ongoing concerns about potholes and speeding in the area.

Update provided regarding parish grant application.

Actions:

ND to chase SDNPA response regarding Brickworks planning issue.

ND to provide AH with relevant SDNPA contact.

AI to respond regarding grant application progress.

26/60

Correspondence: response and further action (AD/BH)

Discussion points:

Letter from resident was discussed regarding land ownership, trusteeship and historic arrangements.

Clarification that the Parish Council did **not transfer land directly to Steep in Need (SIN)**; trustees were changed to avoid conflicts of interest.

Charity Commission involvement noted in establishing a revised scheme around 2015.

Discussion referenced historic grazing rent and a possible corrective payment (approx. £3,000) relating to how income had previously been treated.

Concern raised that the correspondent may be confusing this matter with Village Hall land discussions.

Agreement that the subject is complex and requires a clear factual review was required.

Action:

Clerk to chase SIN for clarification where required.

AD to prepare a factual response to the correspondent correcting any misunderstandings.

Clerk and Chair to prepare Q&A for the website once information confirmed.

26/61

Combined Project

a) Design ideas for land: to receive an update (RH)

Discussion points

Need to consolidate various existing design drawings and sketches into a consistent set of concepts.

A designer has offered to assist but requested access to all existing drawings first. Missing drawings from previous consultations (including those presented at a June drop-in event) need to be located.

Concern raised that changes to Public Open Space layout may require a planning amendment.

Strong agreement that public consultation should take place before committing significant funding.

Junction layout at Mill Lane discussed, likely need for expert advice.

Actions:

RH to gather all existing drawings and circulate to the designer.

BH to confirm planning implications of changes to Public Open Space.

Plan a public engagement session once drawings have been compiled.

26/62

War Memorial (CD/SA)

a) Restoration: to receive update

Discussion points:

Restoration report circulated.

Grant opportunities discussed including War Memorial Trust funding.

EHDC Heritage Team permission likely required before works proceed.

Difficulty contacting relevant heritage contact noted.

Overgrown hedge near the memorial raised as a practical issue affecting access for maintenance.

Actions:

AI to complete grant application, with CD assisting.

SA/ND to follow up with EHDC Heritage Team and escalate if required.

SA to identify hedge ownership and approach owner regarding cutting back.

26/63

Roads and Traffic (CD/AI)

a) Church Road 20mph: update and further actions to be agreed

Discussion points:

Council confirmed continued support for a 20mph limit.

Community consultation previously showed approximately **87% support**.

New information regarding implementation costs (signage etc.) estimated around £20k–£30k.

Costs not previously budgeted.

Average speeds currently around mid-20 mph range.

Police support and eligibility requirements need clarification.

Possible funding routes discussed including grants and developer contributions.

Actions:

AI to investigate potential grant or funding opportunities.
Clerk to check with SDNPA regarding suitability of CIL funding.
Clarify requirements for police support or further evidence needed.

26/64

Footpaths CD/AI

a) Footpath 26: to receive update and further actions to be agreed

Discussion points:

Information circulated regarding a rights-of-way issue where the recorded route runs in a ditch and historic use has differed.

Fencing changes were noted.

Awaiting response from the Public Rights of Way team.

Actions:

CD to follow up with PROW
CD/AI to arrange working group meeting

26/65

Steep Common (SA/CD/TC/AI)

a) ROSPA Inspection repairs/maintenance: to review and approve quotation
Coming to end of its life.

Discussion points:

Quote received (approx. £948) for minor maintenance works including cleaning and minor repairs.

Council agreed work could be completed by volunteers instead of incurring cost.

Actions:

AI and TC to arrange jet washing.
TC and volunteers to level ground around swing and entrance.
SA to circulate rota for regular checks.
Quote not approved.

26/66

Policies/Procedures for adoption

a) IT Policy (AH/AI)

Discussion points:

Suggestion to strengthen policy regarding use of OneDrive / SharePoint for document storage.

Microsoft Teams recommended for online meetings.

Cyber essentials considerations raised.

Actions:

Clerk to circulate Word version for comment.
RH and AD to submit comments by Friday.
Policy to return to April meeting.

b) Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines (AD)

Discussion points:

RH concerns raised about perception of "rubber stamping".

Chair clarified document intended as guidance only.

Resolved: That the Standard Operating Procedures / Guidelines be adopted.

Vote:

7 For

1 Against

1 Abstention

c) Document and Records Retention

i. to note in drafting

Discussion points:

Comments requested on draft.

Requirement noted to include:

- Archiving arrangements (e.g., Hampshire Records Office).
- Data mapping exercise linked to GDPR compliance.

Actions:

Circulate Word document and collect comments

ii. Additional time for clerk to process documents

Actions:

To be review for April meeting.

26/67

Policies/Procedures for review

a) PC Risk Assessment

Discussion points:

Minor amendments requested by RH.

Actions:

RH to provide written comments by Friday.

b) Asset Register

Resolved:

Approved unanimously.

26/68

Finance and Admin:

a) To approve the HSBC bank reconciliations to 10 February 2026
Unavailable due to late bank statement.

b) To approve the Lloyds bank reconciliations to 28 February 2026
Approved.

c) To approve Finance Summary Actuals vs Budget and list of Payments & Receipts
report (Appendix B)
Approved.

26/69

2026/27 Budget Proposal: to approve

Discussion points:

Discussion regarding visibility of the detailed spreadsheet versus PDF summary.

Debate around adequacy of general reserves.

Consideration of potential future costs such as a Neighbourhood Plan.

Majority supported approval.

Decision:

Budget approved.

Vote:

8 For

1 Against (requested full budget detail)

Actions:

Record approval

26/70

Items for the next agenda: to receive items

Warm Space Club at Village Hall.

Green space consultation (PN)

IT / information governance working group findings (AH/AI)

S106 update and developer communications (BH)

Neighbourhood Plan discussion (invite speaker) (AD)

Invite Steep In Need representative to present update APM (SM)

Consider invitation to SDNPA representative and devolution representative (SM)

26/70

Date and time of next meeting: Monday 13 April 7:30pm

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 13 April 2026 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9:15pm.

**ANNUAL REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR
TO
ALL PARISH COUNCILS
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS
1 MARCH 2026**

This report is my **Annual Report** to Parishes - please include this report in the papers for the Annual Parish Meetings which run from March to May across the Hangers.

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. 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.

Organisation	Project Title	Amount Awarded
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.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

Financial Report
Mar-26

Below is a summary of Actual v Budget 2025/2026

Summary of Cost Centres – Payments

	Actual	Budget	Variance
Steep Common & War Memorial	5,513.16	5,800.00	286.84
Community Projects	9,965.53	31,700.00	21,734.47
Overheads	21,716.05	27,533.00	5,816.95
Grants	5,700.00	6,200.00	500.00
Council Projects	0.00	5,050.00	5,050.00
Lengthsman	6,351.63	7,700.00	1,348.37
Insurance Claim - ASW & SID Replacement	3,078.99	0.00	-3,078.99
Total	52,325.36	83,983.00	31,657.64
VAT	5,036.47		
Summary of Cost Centres – Receipts			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Precept	46,000.00	46,000.00	0.00
Grants	250.00	26,500.00	-26,250.00
Bank Interest	321.77	600.00	-278.23
Lengthsman	7,700.00	7,700.00	0.00
Insurance Claim - ASW & SID Replacement	2,828.99	0.00	2,828.99
Defibrillators			
Common Make Over - CiL Funding	7,000.00	0.00	7,000.00
Total	64,100.76	80,800.00	-16,699.24
VAT	2,229.01		
Total CiL Monies Held to Date	4,494.90		
PC Combined Bank Balance 28 February 2026	63,402.29		

Steep PC payments 11 November 2025 - 10 January 2026 HSBC

	Organisation	Amount	Method	Date Paid
	HSBC - Bank Charge	10.00	DD	01.12.2025
	HSBC - Bank Charge	10.00	DD	31.12.2025
	Total	20.00		

Steep PC cleared payments from 1 February - 28 February 2026 Lloyds

		Amount	Method	Date Paid
1	Steep Common - Inside Hedge Cutting	45.00	Online	02.02.2026
2	PTC - Dog Bin	75.94	Online	02.02.2026
3	CD - Padlock & Chain	33.11	Online	02.02.2026
4	Elan City - Warranty	238.80	Online	02.02.2026
5	Scribe - Accounts Package Annual cost	532.80	Online	02.02.2026
6	Sam Marchant - Clerk Salary	1,155.70	Online	05.02.2026
7	HMRC - Employee & Employer	418.58	Online	05.02.2026
8	Lloyds - Bank Charges	8.50	Online	17.02.2026

Appendix B

9	Inspired-IS - Email/Microsoft 365	85.80	Online	18.02.2026
6	Hart Landscaping - Lengthsman	690.00	Online	26.02.2026
	Total	3,304.23		

Steep PC cleared Receipts from 1 February - 28 February 2026 Lloyds

	Total	0.00		