

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
Steep Parish Council
Held on Monday 13 April 2026 at 7.30pm
in Steep War Memorial Village Hall**

Present: Councillors Alison Driver (Chair), Charlotte Duthie (Vice), Shannon Askew, Andrew Inkley, Barry Haywood and Paul Nayton.
County Councillor Russell Oppenheimer
Sam Marchant (Clerk)
2 members of the public

Minute Ref Item

26/72 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Howard, Robin Hollington, Terry Cook and District Councillor Nick Drew.

The Chair announced the regrettable news that Andrew Howard had issued his resignation earlier that day due to workload.

26/73 Declarations of interests

No declarations of interests were made.

26/74 Approval of minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 April 2026.
The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 April were reviewed; they were then approved and signed by the Chair.

26/75 Public Comment

Discussion points:

A resident raised a detailed enquiry concerning the outcome of the Clerk's engagement with Hampshire County Council (HCC) Legal Services in relation to the alleged fraud associated with the historic transfer of the allotment site to Steep In Need (SIN), and the subsequent disposal of part of that land to a private developer.

The resident sought clarity on the extent to which the Parish Council had pursued the matter and whether appropriate consideration had been given to escalation through formal statutory channels. In particular, the resident requested clarification on:

- The definitive outcome of the consultation with HCC Legal Services;
- Whether the advice received supported or advised against the Parish Council exercising its powers under the Local Government Act 1972 to consider a

- formal resolution to refer the matter to the External Auditor and the Charity Commission;
- Where advice had been provided, whether the substance of that advice, including the reasoning behind any recommendation for or against escalation, could be disclosed.

The resident also requested that recent correspondence between the Clerk and HCC relating to this matter be made publicly available, subject to any legal or confidentiality constraints.

Action:

This item to be discussed further under item 8.

26/76

County Councillor Report: to receive a report
Cllr Russell Oppenheimer's report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. (Appendix A)

He reflected on his time in office ahead of his forthcoming departure, noting the valuable role played by parish councils in supporting local communities and delivering tangible outcomes at a local level.

Members discussed the implications of ongoing local government reorganisation and devolution, particularly in relation to the future structure and funding of services. Specific concern was raised regarding the future of Countryside Services staff and the potential impact of organisational changes. While no definitive position is yet available, it was indicated that services are likely to be restructured within new delivery arrangements, with an expectation of longer-term efficiencies and potential funding improvements.

On behalf of the Council, Cllr Duthie expressed appreciation for Cllr Oppenheimer's support and contribution during his tenure.

26/77

District Councillor Report: to receive a report

Discussion points:

No report was received, as the District Councillor was not in attendance.

26/78

SIN: received response and to agree further actions (AD/BH)

Discussion points:

The Council considered the response received from Steep In Need. Members expressed concern regarding the tone and content of the correspondence, which was felt to be dismissive and not conducive to constructive engagement.

Councillors recognised the importance of maintaining a positive and professional working relationship with SIN going forward. It was agreed that any

response should seek to reset the tone of engagement, acknowledging the correspondence received while encouraging a more open and collaborative approach.

Action:

SM & AD to draft a formal response acknowledging the correspondence and seeking to establish a more constructive working relationship

26/79

Response to resident enquiry re land at Church Road: Letter for approval (AD/BH)

Discussion points

Members reviewed the draft response to a resident enquiry regarding land at Church Road. The letter was considered to provide a clear and balanced summary of the background, including the legal context and actions taken by the Parish Council to date.

It was acknowledged that, while the concerns raised were understood, there are limitations on the extent to which the Parish Council is able to pursue the matter further.

The proposed response was unanimously approved.

Actions:

Clerk to issue the approved response to the resident

26/80

Potential SSEN transformer: to receive an update (AD)

Discussion points:

An update was provided regarding the potential siting of an SSEN transformer. A number of possible locations continue to be explored, with further information awaited from SSEN before any decisions can be progressed.

Actions:

None

26/81

SDNP Local Green Space Assessment: to receive an update (PN)

Discussion points:

An update was provided on the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Local Green Space Assessment process. Of the six sites nominated by the public, two (The Common and the War Memorial) have been approved at this stage.

The next phase will involve Parish Council input following the May elections, including confirming that site boundaries are accurate. Members noted the need to verify mapping details, particularly in relation to boundary features such as ditches.

Actions:

Clerk to obtain Land Registry plans to confirm site boundaries.

26/82

Church Road Green Space S106 details: to receive report (BH)

Discussion points:

Report circulated as previously: Agreed to aim for a parish-wide survey before the summer regarding taking ownership of the POS. Key information to be gathered to present to the public (include breakdown of money pots on the website).

Actions:

Clerk to verify financial figures with SDNPA

BH & AD to discuss any restrictions with Stuart Wilson (Developer)

Proposal for public consultation for consideration at the next meeting.

26/83

Lengthsman:

a) To confirm continuation of scheme and participating parishes.

Discussion points:

The continuation of the Lengthsman Scheme and participation by partner parishes was confirmed.

Actions:

Clerk to sign agreement and return to HCC.

b) Pay increase: for approval

Discussion points:

Following consideration of the proposed amount a £30 hourly rate was agreed.

Actions:

Clerk to inform Lengthsman of agreed hourly rate.

26/84

Roads and traffic (CD/AI)

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

Discussion points:

Cllr Nayton agreed to join the Roads and Traffic team.

The Council considered options for implementing a 20mph scheme on Church Road. Estimated costs for traffic calming measures range from £20,000 to £30,000, depending on the approach taken.

Potential measures discussed included signage, road markings, chicanes, and raised features. It was noted that implementation would require support from

Hampshire Constabulary, detailed design work, and potentially planning or highways approvals.

The relative cost and effectiveness of options, including radar speed signs, were discussed. Members agreed that further detailed costing and feasibility work is required before a decision can be made.

Engagement with Bedales School was also suggested as part of a wider approach.

Actions:

PN & AI to:

- Develop costed options for traffic calming measures
- Confirm regulatory and permission requirements

Item to be brought back to the next meeting

26/85

War Memorial: to receive an update (AI/CD/SA)

Discussion points:

Progress was reported on obtaining quotations for works to the War Memorial, including relaying the floor and re-lettering. One further quotation is being sought.

Subject to receipt of the final quotation, the Cllr Inkley intends to proceed with a grant application.

Actions:

AI to proceed with grant application once quotations are complete

26/86

Policies/Procedures for review

a) Risk Assessment: to receive actions following review

Discussion points:

Following review of the Risk Assessment at the previous meeting associated actions were noted.

Key matters identified included:

Review of the existing HCC deposit account and consideration of alternative banking arrangements

Regular updating of the Village Hall key safe code

The need to review the Village Hall building condition survey (last undertaken in 2017)

Progress on drafting IT and data retention policies

Adherence to Financial Regulations.

Actions:

Clerk to ensure documentation is updated and actions progressed

List of policy and procedures to be reviewed

Relevant items to be referred to the Village Hall Committee where appropriate.

- 26/87** **CAB Grant Request:** for approval
Discussion points:
The request for funding from Citizens Advice Bureau was considered.
Members resolved unanimously not to award a grant on this occasion.
- Actions:**
Clerk to inform CAB of decision.
- 26/88** **Finance and Admin:**
- a) To approve the HSBC bank reconciliations to 10 March 2026
Approved.
 - b) To approve the Lloyds bank reconciliations to 31 March 2026
Approved.
 - c) To approve Finance Summary Actuals vs Budget and list of Payments & Receipts report (Appendix B)
Approved.
 - d) PC Insurance Pre Renewal Questionnaire: for review
Insurance pre-renewal questionnaire was reviewed and approved.
- Actions:**
Clerk to complete and send to insurance brokers for renewal.
- 26/89** **APA Speaker & Plans:** to agree
Discussion points:
Arrangements for the Annual Parish Assembly (APA) and AGM were discussed.
District Cllr Drew is to be contacted to confirm availability as a speaker, alongside County Cllr Oppenheimer.
It was agreed that the AGM will commence at 7:30pm (including election of Chair and Vice Chair), followed by the APA at 8:00pm.
- Actions:**
Clerk to follow up with Cllrs Drew and Oppenheimer.
- 26/90** **Items for the next agenda:** to receive items
None.
- 26/91** **Date and time of next meeting:** Tuesday 5 May 7:30pm & APA/AGM Monday 11 May 7pm
The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 5 May 2026 at 7.30pm & APA/AGM Monday 11 May at 7:30pm.
- The meeting closed at 9:15pm.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO ALL PARISH COUNCILS IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS

1 APRIL 2026

1. Hampshire Devolution deal is now pending Parliamentary approval

I mentioned in my 2026 Annual Report in March that the Labour Government's decision to delay the Mayoral elections (to 2028) was disappointing and damaging for Hampshire. Hampshire really needs a Mayor to fight its corner.

This month there is a silver lining to report: the devolution of powers and funding to the new Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority (HSCCA) is now proceeding. The funding will focus on boosting economic growth and encouraging innovation among local businesses. This is good news for Hampshire.

On 16 March 2026 a statutory instrument (SI) was presented to Parliament, which will legally set up the HSCCA and define its initial responsibilities and how decisions will be made. An Interim Chief Executive, Dr Ruth Adams, has been appointed, with temporary staff to fill key roles including Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer to ensure legal operations. The recruitment of permanent staff has started.

To support the establishment of the HSCCA it will receive 40% of its investment fund each year, together with additional funding to support the HSCCA's internal capability, for the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28. This approach will support the organisation to set up and take on its new responsibilities. The full investment fund will then be released when a Mayor is elected in 2028, ensuring that the HSCCA is fully resourced to deliver transformative changes across the region. Its main areas of responsibility will include:

- **Transport:** Responsibility for developing and implementing integrated transport strategies that improve connectivity across the region.
- **Skills and Employment Support:** Authority over adult skills funding, driving upskilling opportunities, and supporting pathways into high-quality employment.
- **Housing and Strategic Planning:** The power to prioritise and deliver new housing developments and support the provision of affordable homes.
- **Economic Regeneration and Development:** The ability to attract and retain national and international investment ensuring the region capitalises on its economic strengths.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** Implement initiatives for the region to reduce carbon emissions, promote sustainability, and protect natural habitats.

Appendix A

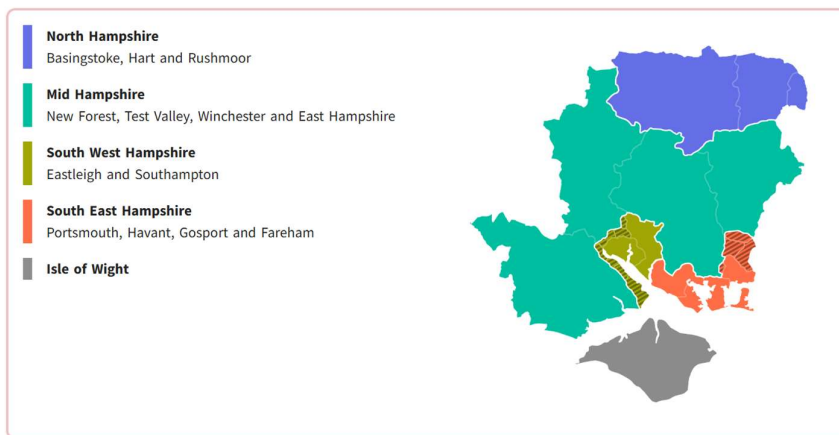
- Health and Wellbeing: Work closely with local partners to reduce health inequalities and support healthier communities.
- Public Safety: Working with Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire and Rescue Authority, enhance safety by supporting collaborative approaches to emergency planning, community resilience, and crime prevention.

Leaders from Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton councils will work together, alongside other board members, on priorities that reflect the needs of local communities.

Councillor Nick Adams-King, Leader of Hampshire County Council, said: “This important legislation now before Parliament will enable our region to shape its own economic priorities, giving us the powers and tools needed to drive growth and improve outcomes for local people. It presents a huge opportunity for local leaders, businesses, and communities to work together to unlock our area’s full potential.”

2. Local Government Reform update

You will probably have seen the reporting in the press about the Government decision to create 4 mainland unitary authorities in Hampshire, as per the below map.



I am disappointed by the Government’s decision. The mid-Hampshire unitary is way too big and diffuse. Setting up the North Hampshire Unitary from scratch, with no anchor authority, will also be extremely expensive and risky. The benefits of LGR will be lower because we will have less opportunities for economies of scale. And in my view the break-up of East Hampshire is not in the interests of the residents of Horndean, Clanfield and Rowlands Castle. Or indeed the rest of East Hampshire.

I do accept that the Government has a right to make this illogical decision, and in Hampshire we will have to do our best to make it work.

3. Green Light for Pulens Lane/Durford Road junction scheme

Appendix A

With this being my final report, it gives me great pleasure to be able to report that the implementation of the safety and traffic-calming scheme at this notorious junction is now imminent. I have discussed the scheme personally with the Leader of Hampshire County Council and he has reassured me that it will be delivered this year.

The scheme, which includes new traffic calming features and drainage upgrades, aims to address longstanding concerns about safety and flooding in the area. The scheme features raised areas of carriageway and a pinch-point at the bridge over Tilmore Brook. As a next step, the project proposal will be considered at the Executive Member for Universal Services Decision Day on 22 June 2026. The contractors should then start in late summer to early autumn 2026.

Ahead of the main works, preparatory drainage activity will take place to clear the existing gullies and the surrounding drainage network. This early work will help prepare the site for permanent drainage improvements and reduce the risk of local flooding at this location. Residents and local businesses will be kept informed via the dedicated project webpage: [Pulens Lane Improvements, Petersfield | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council](#)

4. New process for roadworks notifications

I would like to inform you about a change to the way the Hampshire Highways team notifies local residents and businesses about planned maintenance works.

From today, properties in affected areas will receive a generic A5 sized flyer rather than a bespoke letter to notify them of forthcoming maintenance work in their area. The flyer will direct residents to a new dedicated webpage where they can find the most up to date information about upcoming work in their area. For high impact schemes, custom letters may still be used but this will be by exception.

This change will allow the Highways team to provide information that stays current and can be updated quickly if plans alter - such as changes caused by weather conditions or operational factors. Residents will therefore always have access to the very latest details, including revised dates, timings and traffic management arrangements.

The new approach also delivers a number of other benefits:

- **Improved accuracy:** Online information can be updated immediately, ensuring residents are not relying on printed letters that may become out of date.
- **Efficiency savings:** There will be reduced printing, postage and distribution requirements that will free up resources for delivering more work on the network.
- **Supports digital service transformation:** Most residents now access information online, and this change aligns with our wider move towards more flexible, digital-first communication channels.
- **Environmentally positive:** Using postcards will reduce paper use and waste.

Appendix A

The new process will generally not apply to short-term works, such as surface dressing (where the contractor will continue to deliver letters), or very localised repair work commissioned by the local depots. The website www.one.network will continue to show all roadworks including those undertaken by utilities. For National Highways' network, information will continue to be available on their website at www.trafficengland.com.

At HCC we recognise that a small number of residents may require additional support to access information online. Anyone needing assistance will still have access to the Highways Operation Centre via the standard telephone number.

5. Update on the A272 Bridge repairs



Following last year's extensive repair works to the Victorian bridge on the A272 to the south of Privett, I have been in touch with National Highways and I would like to share some information.

During the works on site, the National Highways contractor Amco Giffen found more defects than were expected. They took some core samples during the works, and it is now evident that the bricks used to build the bridge were of a poor quality. Unfortunately, this means that the bricks are not as durable as one would normally expect. National Highways did look into extending the road closure last year to carry out further works, but the County Council did not allow this. Thank goodness for that. We all remember the traffic problems that occurred due to the poorly implemented diversions.

National Highways do not believe that the remaining defects represent a safety risk to the public. NH are now planning two night shifts at the structure to allow a "laser-point cloud survey" of the structure to be carried out. This will require single-way working under traffic lights with speed limited convoy operation for the safety of the workforce and the travelling public. There is no intention to close the road. There will likely be some minor delays to traffic, but I would agree with NH that traffic lights overnight is the best option to mitigate any delay to the travelling public and maintain a safe working environment.

NH will repeat this laser scan over future years. This will allow them to keep an eye on the repairs carried out and the areas of the structure they believe will require further work. Should they find that we need to return to carry out further works they have promised to let us know well in advance.

6. His Majesty the King visits the South Downs National Park

Appendix A

I was delighted to see my friend Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the SDNPA, shaking hands with the King on his recent visit to the South Downs to open the new Coastal Path. The visit marks a significant occasion for our National Park and I felt very proud.



7. Thank you and good luck with everything!

It has been a great honour to represent Petersfield Hangers at County for the last nine years. I have many wonderful memories and I am proud of many of our achievements. I wish you all the best with your future projects. I will also be sending my best wishes to my successor as County Councillor; I sincerely hope that it will be someone with strong knowledge of the area and substantial experience in business and local government.

I would like to thank you for all the fantastic work you do in your communities. Your work makes a real difference and I know that it is greatly appreciated by Parishioners. I will be working as a languages teacher in Farnham from September but I will still be living in Petersfield. I look forward to bumping into you all over the coming years.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

Financial Report**31.03.2026**

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	24,890.70	27,533.00	2,642.30
Grants	6,150.00	6,200.00	50.00
Council Projects	0.00	5,050.00	5,050.00
Lengthsman	6,868.29	7,700.00	831.71
Insurance Claim - ASW & SID Replacement	3,078.99	0.00	-3,078.99
Total	56,466.67	83,983.00	27,516.33
VAT	5,140.77		
Summary of Cost Centres – Receipts			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Precept	46,000.00	46,000.00	0.00
Grants	518.00	26,500.00	-25,982.00
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	64,368.76	80,800.00	-16,431.24
VAT	2,229.01		
Total CiL Monies Held to Date	4,494.90		
PC Combined Bank Balance 31 March 2026	59,434.68		

Steep PC payments 11 February - 10 March 2026 HSBC

	Organisation	Amount	Method	Date Paid
	Total	0.00		

Steep PC cleared payments from 1 March - 31 March 2026 Lloyds

1	Sam Marchant - Clerk Salary	1,155.70	Online	02.03.2026
2	HMRC - Employee & Employer	418.58	Online	02.03.2026
3	GeoXphere - Parish Online	60.00	Online	02.03.2026
4	Newsletter Grant	450.00	Online	02.03.2026
5	Hart Landscaping - Lengthsman	480.00	Online	13.03.2026
6	Lloyds - Bank Charges	4.25	Online	17.03.2026
7	Inspired-IS - Email/Microsoft 365	85.80	Online	18.03.2026
8	Sam Marchant - Clerk Salary	1,155.70	Online	31.03.2026
9	HMRC - Employee & Employer	418.58	Online	31.03.2026
6	Sam Marchant - Admin Expenses	7.00	Online	31.03.2026

Appendix B

	Total	4,235.61		
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Steep PC cleared Receipts from 1 March - 31 March 2026 Lloyds

	EHDC - Cllr Grant for VH Wine Bluff	268.00	Online	30.03.2026
	Total	268.00		