



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
For East Meon Parish Council held at the Village Hall
At 7.00pm on Monday 22 April 2024**

Present: Parish Councillors Susan Davenport (Chair), Charles Ritchie (Vice Chair), Steven Ridgeon, Matt Atkinson, Tom Tyrwhitt-Drake, Sarah Round, District and County Cllr Rob Mocatta, Sam Marchant (Parish Clerk/RFO) and 74 Parishioners.

The Chair welcomed residents to the APA.

- 1. Apologies for absence were received from:** Cllrs Andrew Hales, Trudie Lang and Jeremy Sillence, and two residents.
- 2. Minutes of the last Parish Assembly** (April 2023) had been circulated and posted on the Parish Council website. They were signed as a true and accurate record. Proposed by Cllr Tyrwhitt-Drake and seconded by Cllr Atkinson.

3. The Chair's Report

Previously posted on the Parish Council website and in the most recent edition of Meon Matters. (See Appendix 1)

The Chair highlighted that since writing her report there had been another significant sewage leak at the Workhouse Lane allotments. She wanted to thank Mike Critchley for all his work in reporting and documenting the spillages. Southern Water had now identified the pipe running underneath Workhouse Lane as a single use pipe intended only to carry foul water, however they confirmed that the entire network was suffering from infiltration from runoff sources which were overloading the system. She had been assured that investigations would be carried out to solve the issue. Another meeting with Southern Water had been scheduled for 1st May. She emphasised that the Council would not give up!

4. Financial Report

The Parish Clerk/RFO presented the unaudited accounts for the year to 31st March 2024. (See Appendix 2)

5. County Council and District Report

Councillor Mocatta reported that bin collections had been working well and that in the last six months there had been no reports of missed bin collections. He said there were plans to introduce food waste collections and also the possibility of glass and recycling being collected together in the future.

With regard to potholes Cllr Mocatta urged residents to keep reporting all potholes on the ourhants app, using a tennis ball as a helpful tool to show the depth of the hole in photographs. He did say that this had been a difficult year for potholes, but the teams continue to work on the roads.

He reported that school admissions had been successful, and that the local schools were all of a high standard.

Finally, he outlined the position with BOATs, following campaigning by East Hampshire parishes for 4x4s and motorbikes to be banned, it was hoped that more gates would be installed in order to impose temporary closures in the wetter months.

Questions

A resident asked whether there was a reason that some of the pothole repairs on Workhouse Lane had been sealed with a tarmac edge and others hadn't and whether this would have an impact on durability. Cllr Mocatta said that he would investigate this but ultimately it was down to the contractor.

A resident asked whether a closure like the one at Halnaker Lane could be imposed on other BOATs in the area. Cllr Mocatta informed that that closure had been issued before the changes in law by the Government and the procedure could not be issued any longer.

6. Parish Forum

The Chair opened the meeting to residents to ask questions and informed residents that it was always possible to contact the Parish Council through the website or by using the contact email addresses on the noticeboard.

Questions

A resident wanted to make the Parish Council aware that the overhead high limit gate arm at the Workhouse Lane Carpark had become increasingly difficult to close and wanted to know if this could be repaired. The Chair assured that she would chase the contractor to carry out these works.

A resident asked whether there were plans to improve the broadband for all households as the houses which had been left behind previously had very poor speeds and were being forced to pay higher fees with another company. Cllr Mocatta said that he was not aware of any plans.

A resident thanked the Chair and all Councillors for their dedication and hard work.

At 7:40pm the Chair introduced the guest speakers, and the formal part of the meeting was closed.

Appendix 1 – 2024 Chair’s Report

Hampshire County Council needs to fill a £132 million budget gap and aims to cut back on virtually all non-statutory services. Similarly East Hampshire District Council plans to reduce the services it currently delivers. Meanwhile, parish councils are expected to continue to provide for their local areas and indeed to take on some of the responsibilities previously funded by the District and County.

As you are no doubt aware, we receive an annual precept which is collected on our behalf by the District Council and is paid by residents in addition to the County and District taxes. You can see how this is spent by looking at the accounts online. None of your councillors are paid, our clerk receives remuneration for 10 hours a week (but often does more!) All the time given by your councillors in work they do to benefit the village is voluntary.

As the first tier of government, we can be the first point of contact for anyone concerned about a community issue. Our task is to do what we can to improve local services and amenities. But we can’t do everything and are increasingly relying on volunteers within the community. We last year appointed a rights of way warden - Brian Biggs, who every two months produces, a detailed report on all the Byways Open to All Traffic (we have 11) in the parish which is sent to HCC for them to act on. In the autumn, our tree warden John MacKinlay stepped down, and we will remember with gratitude all his advice and hands-on work including planting trees (not least the Coronation Tree, and Platinum Jubilee Tree). His role has now been taken on by Richard Dampney who continues the tradition of looking after the parish’s trees and advising the Council. Most notable of these is the ancient Yew at Frogmore which we are told is very old and has been registered as a “Notable Tree” with The Woodland Trust.

Other volunteers come forward to help with litter picking and cutting of The Glebe Hedge and car park hedges. We greatly appreciate all the work carried out by Alastair Dudley Williams around The Green and allotments. We also have East Meon Nature diligently recording and protecting our toads, newts, river fly, hedgehogs and birds and TWiG (Tree Working Group) planting trees and hedges on Parish land. TWiG’s focus in the past year has been keeping the newly planted nature hedges along The Green and the Recreation Ground healthy through watering, weeding and keeping down brambles. For the coming year, the South Downs National Park has provided 4 Elm saplings (cloned from trees with a high resistance to Dutch Elm Disease), for which the TWiG team is looking at suitable planting sites, including possibly some areas around the football field. For the first time The Hampshire Monday Group did some volunteering for us. We purchased all the materials needed and they sanded down and repainted all the railings in Frogmore and did a fantastic job. They also cut back some undergrowth along the footpath from Frogmore Lane to the Recreation Ground. Each year the SDNPA Volunteer Rangers come and clear the river of willow herb. This November was one of the wettest days of the year ... but still they came and over more than 4 hours removed all the excess weeds. We also have our Lengthsman who is paid by HCC to work for 40 hours a year in the village. He cuts back hedges and nettles on footpaths, cleans village signs and clears ditches and footpaths.

During the past 12 months we have been able to secure grants to contribute towards resurfacing the All Sports Court (total cost £14,300) and the purchase of two trees and stone plaques to commemorate Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee and The Coronation of King Charles III.

General maintenance consumes most of the precept, grass cutting, repairs to the 2 children’s play areas and the football pavilion. As you may have heard the pavilion suffered a major leak last winter. This necessitated a mass of remedial work which was at last completed in the summer, funded largely thankfully by an insurance claim. We purchased new football nets for the pitch for the use of villagers. We have arranged for the path across The Green to be replaced with something flatter and wider to suit both old and young alike, with work scheduled to begin in the spring.

Sadly, ash die back is rampant in the parish. We commissioned a detailed survey which identified trees which needed attention in the short and medium term and are in the process of getting the required work done. We are having to take down the Rowan on Washers Triangle and will be removing all the ivy and dead wood from the Frogmore Yew.

The allotments at both Frogmore and Workhouse Lane continue to be popular and are well cared for. We have introduced a new charging system so that now the cost of water consumed is shared by all allotment holders at each site.

Sadly, Harvest FC have moved to a ground nearer where all the players live, and we are actively looking for a new club to take up residence. We are hopeful that we have found the perfect team but need to sort out finances. We cannot run the pitch at a loss.

Although it may seem unimportant, we have after 7 years of correspondence at last registered formal ownership of both the Recreation Ground and the Frogmore Allotments. We knew that they were owned by the village it just took time for the Land Registry to accept this!

And now on to sewage which continues to be a major problem, bubbling up from manhole covers on Workhouse Lane and in residents’ gardens whenever we have heavy rain. Southern Water has at last started to take our complaints seriously. I have already written about the issue of FOG (Fat, Oil and Grease) blocking the main sewer and now have SW regularly jetting the whole stretch to the Water Treatment Plant. Here I need to pay tribute to Mike Critchley who in all weathers is out recording videos of sewage as it leaks onto the street so that these can be sent to SW.

2023 saw more planning applications than the previous year, mostly due to an increase in changes to dwellings. 2023’s applications are broken down as follows:

2023	No objection	No objection with comments	Objection	Total	<i>Total last year</i>
Dwellings	16	18	0	34	27
Trees	10	1	0	11	9
Farms	0	0	0	0	2
Other	3	0	2	5	3
Total	29	19	2	50	41

The Planning Committee visited the sites of all applications, no matter how large or small, before submitting a response. Details of the Parish Council's comments on all East Meon planning applications can be accessed via the SDNPA planning website:

<https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/>

The 2 objections were to an application to erect a storage building and other facilities on a plot of land on Westbury Park (not related to Westbury House), and to an application to install a 60m communications tower near the reservoirs by Wether Down Lane (both applications are still 'in progress').

Building work on the development of 12 new homes on Coombe Road is almost complete (at last!). We were very disappointed that no affordable homes provider was interested in taking on 6 of the dwellings for social rent. This raises questions about how continuing to require new homes in small villages such as East Meon can support the SDNPA's (and Government's) objective of providing more social rented housing. The Parish Council has worked with SDNPA planners to insist that conditions placed on the development are met, especially with respect to drainage, landscaping, and land set aside for nitrate mitigation.

The SDNPA asked Parish Councils to prepare a Parish Priorities Statement (PPS) as part of the evidence base for the review of the South Downs Local Plan. The Parish Council prepared and submitted its PPS, with great support and input from our community (thank you!). Our clear message was that our infrastructure (sewerage and roads) and protection of the River Meon need to be given priority over yet more housing development, at least in the medium term. In addition, we have given feedback to East Hampshire's Local Plan as part of their consultation. Although we are outside the scope of this Local Plan regarding housing, we are impacted by, for example, increased traffic resulting from development in areas south of East Meon.

Finally, I would like to record my thanks to all the Councillors for their work over the past year. My especial thanks go to David Cooke and Sharon Sillence who stepped down after, in Sharon's case 8 years and in David's an astounding 23 years on the Parish Council. They will both be much missed. Their places have been filled by Trudie Lang and Jeremy Sillence both of whom will, I am confident, prove to be equally capable and dedicated members of the team.

Last but not least my thanks go to our very efficient and patient clerk, Sam for going above and beyond in everything she does for us!

Susan Davenport
Chair East Meon Parish Council

Appendix 2 – Finance Report 2023/24

East Meon Parish Council Accounts Receipts and Payments 2023/2024				
Receipts	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance	Actual 2022/23
Parish Precept	£30,728.00	£30,728.00	£1,875.00	£28,853.00
Allotments Frogmore	£360.00	£368.75	£128.75	£240.00
Allotments Workhouse Lane	£450.00	£663.10	£353.10	£310.00
Frogmore Car Park	£400.00	£400.00	£0.00	£400.00
Pavilion Income	£1,080.00	£360.00	−£360.00	£720.00
EHDC Grant		£463.40	−£1,036.60	£1,500.00
Other Grants			−£400.00	£400.00
Bank Interest	£10.00	£599.99	£414.44	£185.55
SSE Refund		£67.54	−£131.58	£199.12
Insurance Claim - WH Lane Car Park		£450.00	£450.00	
Defib Box		£465.00	£465.00	
Kings Coronation Celebrations		£1,272.24	£1,272.24	
Queens Platinum Jubilee			−£2,453.17	£2,453.17
Cricket Club Contribution			−£494.00	£494.00
Rates Refund			−£58.14	£58.14
Total	£33,028.00	£35,838.02	£25.04	£35,812.98
Insurance Claim - All Sports Pavilion		£29,158.20	£20,762.20	£8,396.00
SDNPA CIL Monies Received		£47,514.00		£7,229.16
Gross Total		£112,510.22	£61,072.08	£51,438.14
Payments	Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance	Actual 2022/23
Administration	£17,305.00	£16,585.22	£2,991.14	£13,594.08
Allotments	£150.00	£925.45	£826.68	£98.77
Capital Projects/Improvements	£4,500.00	£1,089.35	−£1,283.71	£2,373.06
Donations	£900.00	£890.00	−£2,610.00	£3,500.00
Kew's Meadow - Pavilion & Court	£2,650.00	£3,878.09	£2,113.94	£1,764.15
All Sports Court Resurface		£14,300.00	£14,300.00	
Parish Land	£3,890.00	£5,363.25	£1,610.15	£3,753.10
Play Equipment	£2,160.00	£621.40	−£1,145.88	£1,767.28
Recreation Ground Trust	£1,600.00	£1,979.89	£1,394.37	£585.52
Queens Platinum Jubilee Celebrations			−£2,082.12	£2,082.12
Kings Coronation Celebrations			−£1,272.24	£1,272.24
Kings Coronation Plaque		£461.60	£461.60	
Hedge Planting TWiG			−£1,029.73	£1,029.73
Total	£33,155.00	£46,094.25	£14,274.20	£31,820.05
Insurance Claim All Sport Pavilion		£27,255.22	£20,340.22	£6,915.00
Gross Total	£33,155.00	£73,349.47	£34,614.42	£38,735.05

East Meon Parish Council Budget Forecast 2024/2025		
Receipts	Actual 2023/24	Budget 2024/25
Parish Precept	£30,728.00	£32,571.68
Allotments FM	£368.75	£360.00
Allotments WH	£663.10	£450.00
Frogmore Car Park	£400.00	£400.00
Pavilion Income	£360.00	£1,200.00
EHDC Grant	£463.40	
Sports Pavilion Insurance Claim	£29,158.20	
Insurance Claim WH Car Park	£450.00	
Other Grants		
SSE Refund	£67.54	
Kings Coronation Celebrations	£1,272.24	
SDNPA CIL Monies	£47,514.00	
Bank Interest	£599.99	£300.00
Defib Box	£465.00	
Total	£112,510.22	£35,281.68
SDNPA CIL Monies Held to Date	£57,243.16	
Payments	Actual 2023/24	Budget 2024/25
Administration	£16,585.22	£18,291.00
Allotments	£925.45	
Capital Projects/Improvements	£624.35	£4,000.00
Donations	£890.00	£900.00
Kew's Meadow - Pavilion & Court	£3,878.09	£2,190.00
All Sports Court Resurface	£14,300.00	
Parish Land	£5,363.25	£8,200.00
Play Equipment	£621.40	£1,680.00
Defib Box	£465.00	
Recreation Ground	£1,979.89	
Sports Pavilion Insurance Claim	£27,255.22	
Kings Coronation Plaque	£461.60	
Total	£73,349.47	£35,261.00