

Hampstead Norreys Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 25th April 2024. Held in the Memorial Room, Hampstead Norreys Village Hall. Commencing at 7:35 pm.

Present:

Chair	Ros Maskell
Parish Councillors	Mike Corish, Stephen Davis, Toby Harris, Harriet McCalmont, Stephen Miller
Officers	Sarah Marshman, Clerk
Public	5

Minutes

1 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Fiona Bennett.

2 To approve the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27th April 2023

Those present agreed the minutes of the last meeting be accepted as a true record. The Chair signed the Minutes.

3 To receive an update from the Flood Warden

There is a significant issue with groundwater levels in the area. Sewage discharge into the street and into the River Pang has been noted. The issue has attracted local, national, and international press interest.

All parishes along the Pang are involved in the Pang Valley Flood Forum (PVFF). The forum aims to coordinate efforts and hold the Environment Agency (EA), Thames Water (TW), and West Berkshire Council (WBC) accountable for their actions.

Over the last 14 months, the region has experienced double the amount of rainfall compared to historical averages.

Efforts are being made to get TW to improve their level of service. TW has the capacity to perform remedial works such as lining the sewers. These works cannot be conducted while the water table remains high.

The groundwater issue is expected to persist for another 2-3 months. Groundwater levels are not expected to subside soon. The biggest concern is the upcoming winter season, making preparation crucial. Ensuring Water Street is cleaned is a priority.

4 To receive the Annual Report from the Chair

I would like to start by acknowledging my predecessor David Barlow who was Chair up until he tragically lost his life in October 2023

The role of the Parish Council is to represent the Parishioners. Whilst we are all elected and co-opted officials, we are unpaid. We all live in the village and care for our village. We meet bi-monthly.

I am pleased to confirm we have this year have four new Parish Councillors - Mike Corish, Toby Harris, Stephen Miller, and Steve Davies

The key areas we have worked on this year

1. Speeding - we share the equipment with Yattendon PC and have had three more sites approved one by the school. One on Water St and one on Yattendon Rd. During this month and May we will be concentrating on Sid being in the centre of the village from this data we will be analysing the speed. The Sid equipment has historically been proven to reduce speed.
2. Flooding - whilst this is a very difficult time for the village Steve Davies who is the Flood Warden for the village has joined the PC and is keeping us updated.
3. Dean Meadow – The Village Hall is run separately from the PC and Harriet McCalmont the Parish Councillor has now joined the Village Hall committee.

The Play Area and Equipment is monitored by Fiona Bennet together with Harriet McCalmont and annually inspected by an outside contractor for health and safety requirements and we carry out any work required. We have this year had a sunshade installed.

The Cricket Club is run separately and we as the PC ensure the outfield area and the grass in the Dean is maintained and cut to a high standard.

Dog Bins and Waste Bins - we have now moved to an alternative contractor and are hopeful the service will improve.

4. Planning – Planning applications are sometimes reviewed by the full council and sometimes by the Planning Committee. Our planning committee is made up from Mike Corish, Fiona Bennett, Toby Harris and Harriet McCalmont. They review the planning application and comment accordingly to WBC
5. Phone Box is the PC property, and we are looking at options available to us for this to be put to some use with ideas from the Downs School

6. Replacement lighting bollards around the Village Hall and along the railway cutting – we were unable to complete this project within the financial year but have commissioned this work and it will be completed soon.

7. We are looking at the surrounding footpaths in our area.

5 To receive the Annual Finance Report from the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer

The Clerk gave her report which is in Appendix 1.

6 To receive reports from Village Groups and Organisations

The Living Rainforest

The Living Rainforest has been open for 31 years. It is operated by The Trust for Sustainable Living, a charity prioritising sustainability education. Approximately 25,000 school children visit every year. It also collaborates with schools in 120 countries globally.

In 2012, the Living Rainforest launched an international schools competition on sustainability. This competition is now the world's leading student essay competition on sustainability themes.

The primary mission is to help close the sustainability gap through education, which is seen as fundamental to making a lasting impact.

To continue their mission, there is a need to improve the facility. The goal is to become the UK's first net zero glasshouses. A design team has been appointed to work towards this goal. There are six specific goals set for this project, with the aim to achieve them by 2030.

There is a desire to improve public transport to the site. Ensuring a safe route from the village to the site is also a priority.

Hampstead Norreys Village Hall

At the start of the year, the Charities Commission confirmed that the Hampstead Norreys War Memorial Trust had been closed. This trust had been the source of confusion over the years, as it was originally established to support and justify the memorial hall on Water Street. When a new building was constructed in the 1980s, the old trust was not officially closed, leading to ongoing confusion.

In 2018, during the launch of the refurbishment and extension project, HMRC required clarification regarding the trust's status. Consequently, it was decided

to close the old trust. The guidelines from the old trust were reviewed and integrated into the existing trust, which were then formally adopted.

Regarding governance, the building and meadow are now under the control of the Amenities Trust. The Village Hall (VH) committee, which previously acted as a bridge between the two trusts, has been restructured as a sub-committee of the Amenities Trust.

The online booking system is working well, and new bank accounts have been established. CCTV was installed approximately two years ago, enhancing security.

Efforts were made to restart the Youth Club last year. While the children were encouraging and enthusiastic about the club, there were not enough adults available to meet safeguarding requirements, preventing its relaunch.

Several events have been successful, including Burns Night, which saw a good turnout and positive feedback.

The refurbishment project, which began in 2018, aims to revitalize the facilities. However, there is a shortage of storage space. To address this issue, a review of the items currently being stored is underway to create more space.

Hampstead Norreys Community Shop

The community shop has had a good year and is currently in a sound financial situation. However, it is feeling the effects of the rising cost of living, as people are buying fewer goods. To counter this, the manager is working diligently to source lower-priced, good-value products, with an emphasis on local goods. The shop has recently welcomed a new manager following the retirement of the previous manager after eight years of service.

Despite the lower sales of goods, the growing popularity of the café has helped balance the shop's overall performance. The candlelit market continues to be a great success, drawing in the community. The orchard is also thriving, with plans to start selling homemade apple juice and apples soon.

The shop has been active in organising children's activities, such as Easter cupcake decorating, and providing volunteering opportunities through the Duke of Edinburgh program. The Owl Club, aimed at children aged 8 and above, encourages them to engage in habitat surveys to attract owls to the local woods.

As a community business owned by the community for the community, the shop extends its gratitude to all volunteers and customers for their ongoing support.

Hampstead Norreys Cricket Club

We would like to extend our thanks to the Parish Council and the Amenities Trust for their continued support. David, who did much to develop and champion the club, is deeply missed, and the club feels his loss very keenly.

Village cricket plays an important role in our community, offering a great spectator sport and serving as a valuable asset. This season, the club has taken on a Saturday side, now fielding three teams each week: Wednesday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and Sunday afternoons. The Sunday side offers a relaxed form of cricket, while the Saturday side competes in league cricket. The Wednesday side is largely drawn from the village. These additional sides bring important revenue to the club.

There are 31 games scheduled on the Dean this summer, with a total of 53 games when including away matches. This will put pressure on the pitch, so we have recruited a groundsman and are encouraging members to help out. We are keen to increase community participation and are considering offering a small paid bar on Wednesday evenings to boost revenue and provide a community focal point.

We are also introducing a social membership, allowing individuals to support the club. The artificial strip will need relaying for next season. Additionally, we will hold a Dave Barlow Memorial Day against East Woodhay, hoping to make it an annual event for the Barlow Cup, complete with family activities.

7 To receive questions from members of the public

Various local issues were discussed. The Clerk will report them to West Berkshire Council.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8:46 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Finance Report

The finance report for Hampstead Norreys Parish Council for the financial year 2023/24 is presented. Please note that all figures are subject to audit.

Income

The total income received from all sources of funding was £33,880.

The income consists of:

- Precept £26,167
- VAT refund £6,917
- Interest £635
- Allotment rent £161

Expenditure

The total expenditure for the year was £23,756.

Significant figures included in this total are:

- Grounds maintenance £3,372
- Staff employment costs £5,873
- Website/emails and software £674
- Insurance £527
- Audit £575
- Electricity £599
- Tree surgery £1,100
- Sunshade for play area £2,550
- Refuse disposal £2,723
- VAT £2,361 (reclaimable)

The following organisations benefited from donations:

- St Mary's Church (for grass cutting) £1,200
- West Berkshire Countryside Society £100
- Pang Valley Flood Forum £100
- Royal British Legion £50

The council budgeted £5,000 to replace the lighting bollards in the Village Hall car park and along the railway cutting. The council was unable to complete this project before the end of the financial year so this money will roll over into 2024/2025 and the replacement lighting should be installed soon.

Looking Forward to 2024/25

The Council has increased the precept to £26,821. This is an increase of 2.5%. A Band D household will pay a total of £74.60 in the year, or just £1.43 per week.

The council has included funding to make donations to the usual organisations. It is expected that large items of expenditure will continue to include grounds maintenance, refuse disposal, and employment costs.

Appendix 2: Hampstead Norreys Primary School

Hampstead Norreys C of E Primary School is well known to the PCC, as the school is linked to St Mary's Church based in the parish.

In Spring 2024, there were 64 pupils on the school roll, taught across four classes. Intake into Reception in September 2023 was 3. This reduction in applications is common to many primary schools in West Berkshire and is thought to be due to several factors.

The school may need to reduce its Published Admission Number (PAN) as the number of pupils in the catchment is very low. The PAN is the maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group. Each school has a PAN for the whole school which is agreed with the Local Authority. The published number is divided evenly into each year group to arrive at the PAN for each year group.

The Federation between Hampstead Norreys C of E Primary School and The Ilsleys Primary School continues to be strong and work very well. Within the federation, the two schools retain their independence and individuality, and for Hampstead Norreys the values and ethos remains as before.

Hampstead Norreys is an inspirational and vibrant environment which fosters curiosity, responsibility and a desire for learning based on Christian values. Our school promotes independence, confidence, resilience and tolerance. It provides a safe and welcoming environment and is an integral part of the local and wider community. It fosters a Christian attitude and upholds Christian values. It encourages learners to communicate with and respect others and be accepting of diversity as well as promoting equality. It prides itself on maximising pupils' potential through enrichment, challenge and personalised learning. Through a broad balanced and rich curriculum, we equip all our pupils with the skills and attitudes needed to play an active role in today's global society. The school values good manners and has high expectations of all pupils and staff.

The Foundation Governor visited the school twice at the end of February 2024. One visit was to accompany the Deputy Head Teacher on a learning walk. We saw some great learning as well as staff that clearly work very well with each other and the children. The staff were good at making sure that children know what is expected of them and are able to learn at their own pace, and special needs children get the extra attention that they require without disrupting the rest of the class. Learning walks are conducted regularly, ensuring that teaching is on-track with objectives and that overall continuous improvement is implemented.

The second visit was to review the progress of the Christian Vision with the RE Lead and the Little Oaks Committee. Every class now has a display relating to the Christian Vision and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. They have clearly been putting in lots of hard work to change the culture and ensure that the Christian Vision is embedded into everyday life in the school. Clearly progress is being made as everyone I spoke to were enthused and excited to help. They have been carrying out "Little Oakstead" inspections to ensuring that

the culture change sticks. There is still the intent to have a spiritual garden if at all possible.

Reverend Renee is visiting the school regularly, building an excellent relationship between the church and the school.